

GENERAL ZORAWAR SINGH

PROF. SUKHDEV SINGH CHARAK

PUBLICATIONS DIVISION



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PUBLICATIONS DIVISION
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DEDICATED
TO THE
BRAVE AND INTREPID SOLDIERS AND GENERALS
OF
FUTURE INDIA

Preface

THE PEOPLE OF Jammu and Kashmir were acquainted with the military achievement of Zorawar Singh, popularly known in this region as Wazir Zorawar Singh Kalhuria, since the days of his notable conquests. The stories of his Himalayan and trans-Himalayan campaigns were narrated in every home, and the ballads of his heroic deeds were sung by the bards of Jammu region and were eagerly listened to by the people at large. His name particularly inspired the soldiers of Jammu and Kashmir and of the Dogra Regiments of the Indian Army. But his memory and military expeditions acquired larger dimensions with the aggravation of Indio-China relations on the issue of the Ladakhi-Tibetan borders in the west. For the first time, this circumstance excited the nation's interest in General Zorawar Singh, and scholars and statesmen in this country and abroad became interested in his life and career. Some useful efforts were made to study Zorawar's campaigns and their impact on international politics in Asia and around.

As a student of the history and culture of Jammu and Kashmir and the Dogras, I have been drawn towards the General's career since the beginning of my historical research. I learnt about the original records on his campaigns lying in the Government Secretariat at Lahore. These furnished me with the day-to-day account of his campaigns and movements and the politics involved in the whole affair. The authors of the *Himalayan Battleground* discovered the contemporary Chinese reports concerning Zorawar's Tibetan expedition which confirmed most of the Indian records and at the same time filled some lacunae which existed in the details of the expedition. These records provided a sound and scientific basis for the study of the career and military achievements of the General.

Very useful attempts had already been made in this sphere by Maj.-General Sir Alexander Cunningham, and then by A. H. Francke during the third quarter of the nineteenth century, a few decades after the General's death. Alexander Cunningham not only gave the Ladakhi version of Zorawar's conquests but also recorded the statement of Colonel Basti Ram, one of Zorawar's officers who accompanied him on his Tibetan campaign. The statement was written by Colonel Basti Ram for Alexander Cunningham on his personal request. All these sources enabled me to piece together all the information into a readable and vivid account of the Dogra General's great deeds. I would, therefore, like to thank all these scholars whose researches enabled me to write a full length study of General Zorawar Singh's life and career and military exploits, on which study the present simplified monograph has been based.

It is a welcome decision of the Publications Division of the Central Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to bring out a book on General Zorawar Singh for the benefit of the young readers of our country.

University of Jammu

Sukhdev Singh Charak

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. EARLY LIFE	13
3. CONQUEST OF LADAKH	23
4. BALTI CAMPAIGN	46
5. CONQUEST OF TIBETAN REGIONS	61
6. THE LAST PHASE	77
7. THE FINAL SETTLEMENT	96
8. ZORAWAR'S PERSONALITY	113
APPENDIX	129

I

Introduction

THE LIFE AND ACHIEVEMENTS of General Zorawar Singh are closely related to the history of the rise of the Sikh kingdom of Lahore and the Dogra Raj of Jammu. He, as a military commander, belonged to both. He was an officer of Raja Gulab Singh Dogra of Jammu, and through him a part of the military organisation of the Lahore kingdom. His military exploits are, therefore, a part of the history of both these states, which however have become a golden chapter in the annals of Jammu Raj.

Jammu Raj was once an extensive principality. As late as 1782, at the time of the death of its greatest ruler, Maharaja Ranjit Dev, it extended from the Jhelum in the west to the Ravi in the east; and from the middle mountains in Kishtwar in the north to Sialkot and Shakargarh in the south, including a large strip of plain now lying in Pakistan. After his death, however, the Jammu kingdom fast disintegrated. For over two decades after him, his descendants had to struggle hard for keeping Jammu independent and integrated. In this effort they came into conflict with the neighbouring Sikh principalities (called Misl) of the Punjab, which had come into existence on the downfall of the Mughal and the Abdali power in the Punjab after 1773. The Sikh chiefs in the neighbourhood of the Jammu kingdom were controlling the power-

ful Misls of the Bhangis, Sukarchakias and the Kanheyas. These Sikh chiefs and the Rajas of Jammu were always at war with one another. They used to make raids on the territory of their neighbours and to plunder their people from time to time. Those were the days of loot, plunder, rapine and lawlessness. Such a condition presented a golden opportunity to the brave, reckless and the undaunted soldiers for showing their mettle.

Of these Sikh Misls, that of the Sukarchakias was the most powerful. Its founder, Charat Singh, had occupied Gujranwala and some territory around Sialkot. When he died in 1774, his son Mahan Singh, inherited his lands and forces. By his struggles against the neighbouring chiefs of the Bhangi and Kanheya Misls and the Rajas of Jammu, he further extended the Sukarchakia possessions. In 1783, he looted Jammu and carried away property worth a crore of rupees. Strengthening his position by the plunder of Jammu, he challenged even his guardian, Jaimal Singh, the Kanheya Misladar. In a battle fought at Batala, Jaimal Singh's only son Gurbaksh Singh was killed and the dejected old chief withdrew from the battlefield. Later, he won the friendship of Mahan Singh by marrying his grand-daughter to the latter's son, Ranjit Singh. Thus the resources and armies of both the Misls were united, of which later Ranjit Singh took full advantage to extend his power and possessions. Now Mahan Singh carried on war with the Bhangi chiefs of Lahore, Gujrat and Wazirabad. As a result, he occupied Sialkot, Wazirabad and some parts of Jammu principality.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, the Abdalis had also conquered the western parts of the Punjab. Ahmad Shah Abdali had conquered the province of Lahore from the Mughals in 1752. He invaded the Punjab several times afterwards and brought under his sway all the hill states of the Jammu and the Kangra groups and occupied territories up to Jullundhur and Multan. But after his death in 1773, the

Abdali kingdom disintegrated and the Sikh chiefs drove away his successors from Lahore. The Abdali rulers, Taimur Shah and Zaman Shah, however, continued to raid Lahore from time to time, drive out the Bhangi chiefs and occupy the city for short periods. Thus, for about 25 years an intermittent war continued between the Sikhs and Abdalis for the possession of Lahore and its dependencies. In these battles Mahan Singh Sukarchakia took a prominent part. In spite of the successive Abdali raids, he succeeded in creating a large principality. He had also to fight against his rival Sikh chiefs, and in one of these battles fought near Jammu, he died in 1792, leaving behind his son, the 12-year-old son Ranjit Singh, to succeed to his much disputed possessions.

At that time Jammu Raj was in the throes of disunity. After the death of Brijraj Dev, the son and successor of Ranjit Dev, in 1787, the former's one-year-old son, Sampuran, was raised to the throne and Mian Mota was made the Minister of the State. Mian Mota was a strong and able man. But he also could not control the feuds which rent the ruling house of Jammu. The contending parties now and then sought the aid of their respective friendly Sikh chiefs. Consequently, the Bhangi and Sukarchakia chiefs often got the opportunity to raid and plunder Jammu territories. Jammu also lost large strips of territory to these Misaldars. As a result of the weakening of the hold of the central authority at Jammu, its outlying principalities, like Kishtwar, Bhadrawah, Bhimbar, Rajauri and Poonch, threw off the yoke of Jammu. Even Basohli and Jasrota lost touch with Jammu, and when invaded by Sikh chiefs time and again, these received no aid from Jammu where factional struggle was absorbing all the energy of its rulers. Thus, Jammu's ties with its tributaries had grown weak. A political uncertainty and chaos prevailed among the hill states of Jammu region.

In these circumstances, the boy King Sampuran died in

1797 at an age of ten, and the courtiers and chief men of the ruling clan, raised Jit Singh, Sampuran's cousin, to the *gaddi* of Jammu. He too was a weak and worthless ruler. As he was not the direct descendant of the ruling line, various other houses came forward with their claim to the *gaddi* of Jammu. This made the situation more confounded. Mian Mota, who still held the administrative powers, tried his best to keep control on the rival factions. But, finally, the Jammu court itself divided into two factions, the one led by Mian Mota, and the other headed by the Bandrahli Rani of Raja Jit Singh. These two parties, supported by several clans on either side, entered a cut-throat competition for grasping the ruling power. It led to the treacherous murder of the rival chiefs. In such an orgy of assassinations, Mian Mota was also killed by assassins in 1813. Such a party struggle had further weakened the once powerful Jammu Raj.

While Jammu was thus growing weaker, Ranjit Singh had started consolidating his possessions and strengthening his power. Zaman Shah, the Abdali ruler of Kabul, made several raids on the Punjab between 1790 and 1798 and occupied Lahore on every occasion. But the confederacy of the Sikh Misaldars defeated his armies everytime and the Bhangi chief used to re-occupy Lahore time and again. Ranjit Singh took a prominent part in these battles against the Abdalis and shone as a great military leader.

On the other hand, the inhabitants of Lahore no longer wanted their masters, the Bhangi chiefs, who had failed so often to save them from plunder and molestation by the Abdali invaders. So, when Zaman Shah invaded Lahore for the last time in 1798 and occupied it, he had to retreat hurriedly to Kabul because of a revolt there, and the inhabitants of Lahore invited Ranjit Singh to occupy the city. Zaman Shah had also appointed Ranjit his governor of Lahore in return for his help in salvaging a number of his big guns from the

flooded Jhelum, which were required by him at Kabul. On the authority of Zaman Shah's appointment order and the willing acquiescence of the inhabitants and their leaders, Ranjit Singh easily occupied Lahore and drove away the Bhangi chiefs. A few years later he took possession of Amritsar also. Thus, he became the most powerful Sikh chief in the Punjab. He led raids into the hill countries and against the smaller principalities in Punjab, and annexed them one by one. Finally, in 1808, he humbled Raja Sansar Chand Katoch of Kangra and compelled him to give him the possession of the famous Kangra fort. The same year, his commander at Sialkot, Hukma Singh Chimni, made a raid on Jammu territories, but was driven back by its brave people. He, however, succeeded in occupying most of its territory up to the very walls of Jammu. Thus, Ranjit Singh's sway now extended over a large territory from Kangra in the east, to Rawalpindi in the west, including the Jullundhur Doab.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh also led a few expeditions into the territories between the Sutlej and the Yamuna, conquered Patiala, Nabha, Jindh, Ambala, Kaithal, Ludhiana and a number of other places. But in this attempt he came into conflict with the British Government of India. The British had extended their sway from Bengal over Oudh and Delhi and had defeated the Marathas in north India, and had taken under their protection the Mughal Emperor of Delhi. They had their own designs on the cis-Sutlej territory between that river and the Yamuna. They were already in touch with the Sikh chiefs and other leaders in the region. When Ranjit Singh conquered various places in that region in his two expeditions, the Sikh chiefs and others sought protection of the British. Consequently, the British Governor-General sent his representative, Charles Metcalfe, to Lahore to negotiate a treaty of friendship with Maharaja Ranjit Singh. In 1809, the Maharaja was forced, at the threat of invasion, to agree to the British terms. A Treaty of Friendship was signed at

Amritsar.

According to the treaty, Ranjit Singh had to withdraw his armies from the cis-Sutlej region and gave up all claim in future on that territory. Thus the Sutlej became the southern boundary of Ranjit Singh's kingdom. His dream of conquering the whole of the Punjab up to the Yamuna and of annexing all the Sikh principalities was shattered by the British diplomacy. However, other directions were left open to him to give some material shape to his ambitions.

Thwarted in the south, Ranjit Singh directed all his energies on the conquest of the areas in the north and north-west. One after the other he conquered and annexed Multan, the Derajat and Kashmir and established his firm hold on most of the hill principalities up to Mandi and Kulu. In 1812, Jammu was finally conquered when the rival factions of Rani Bandrahli invited Sikh intervention against her rival Mian Mota. Ranjit Singh's son, Prince Kharak Singh, occupied Jammu with the help of Mian Mota, and the same year he was confirmed as its ruler by Ranjit Singh. Mian Mota was kept in office as Minister and an influential grandee of the Sikh court. The Sikh rule at Jammu continued up to 1820, although the people under their rebel leaders like Mian Dido, Mian Diwan Singh, Puro Darorha and others, constantly defied the Sikh authority in various regions and made peaceful occupation of Jammu territories impossible. However, Ranjit Singh had by 1820 extended his kingdom from the Indus in the west to the Sutlej in the east and the south-east; and from the upper courses of the Chenab in Bhadrawah in the north to Multan and the frontier of Sindh in the south-west. Thus, Maharaja Ranjit Singh had established a Sikh kingdom in the north-western Punjab and the hills, with his capital at Lahore.

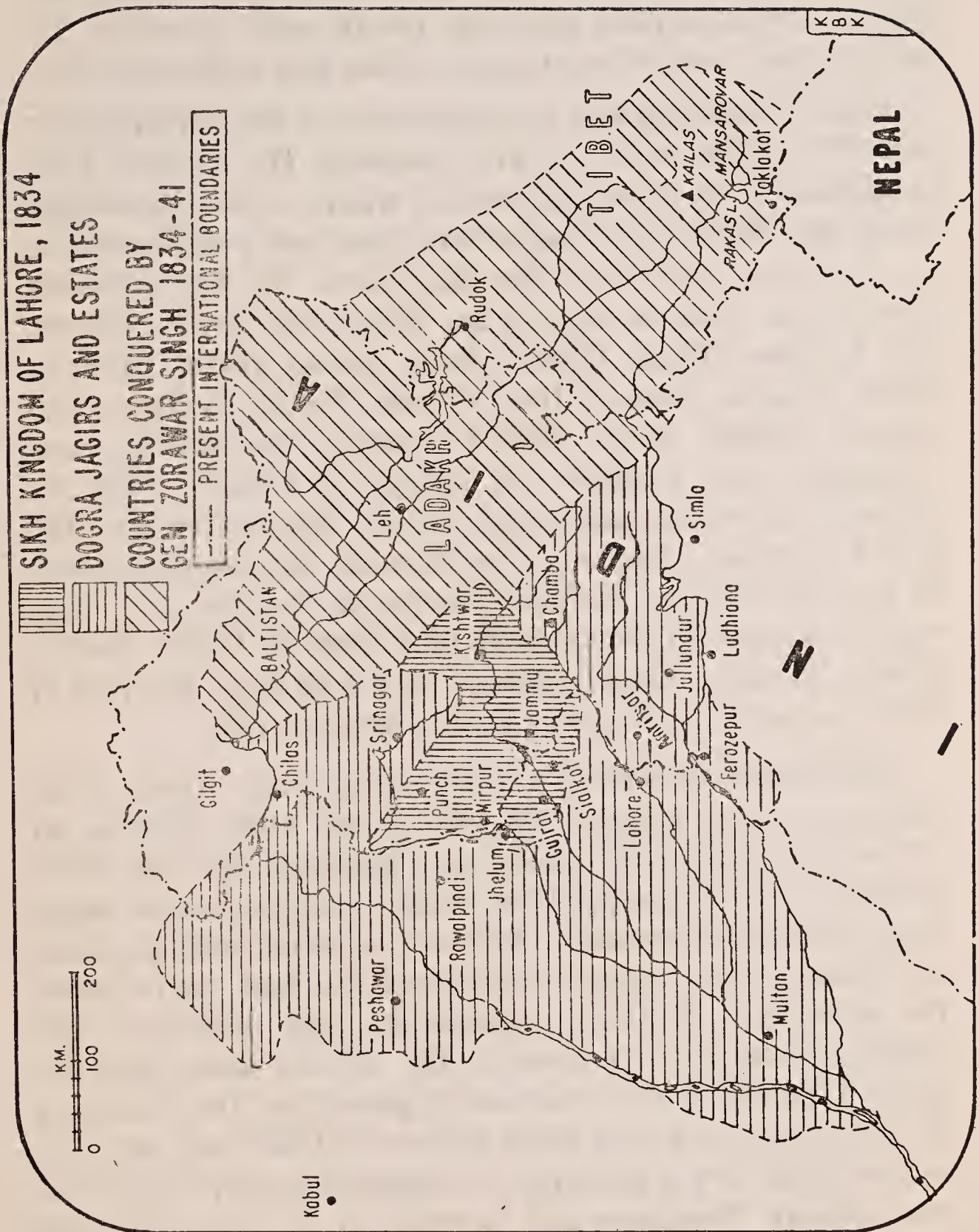
The further expansion and consolidation of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's empire was achieved by the intrepid and

shrewd Dogra Rajas, also called the Dogra Brothers—Gulab Singh, Dhian Singh and Suchet Singh. These Dogra chiefs of Jammu had also risen to eminence, like Ranjit Singh, by dint of their dash and dextrous statesmanship under his patronage. These Dogras belonged to a junior line of the ruling family of Jammu, descending through Maharaja Ranjit Dev's second younger brother, named Mian Surat Singh. The latter was the great grandfather of the Dogra Brothers. Their grandfather, Mian Zorawar Singh, and father, Mian Kishore Singh, held small jagirs near Jammu and were enrolled in the retinue of the rulers of Jammu with whom they were related. The powerful Minister of Jammu, Mian Mota, was their uncle under whose care and patronage they grew up and developed soldierly skills which were then considered a proud possession of a Rajput youth of those days. The elder, Gulab Singh, while a youth of only 16 years, fought bravely against the Sikh invaders under Hukma Singh Chimni in 1808. Gulab Singh's show of extraordinary military prowess in that battle of Jammu had won him fame and recognition as a brave soldier. Jammu was conquered by the Sikhs soon after, and the old kingdom of the Dogras was broken up. Mian Mota, however, was retained as Minister and administrator of Jammu as a grandee of the Sikh empire. The Mian wielded great influence on Maharaja Ranjit Singh who appreciated his ability and valued his friendship. It was through the good offices of Mian Mota that Gulab Singh first got employment in 1810 as a petty officer in Ranjit Singh's cavalry. A couple of years later, Dhian Singh and Suchet Singh also got employed in Ranjit's army. Soon they won the confidence and admiration of the Sikh ruler by their brave and loyal services. All of them rose to eminence. After three or four years of service, Gulab Singh was made the commander of the Jamwal Cavalry in Ranjit's army. By 1815, the family had received jagirs worth a lakh of rupees with a right to raise about a thousand troops. Their jagirs lay both in Jammu and north and western Punjab.

In 1817, Riasi was also added to their jagirs. In 1818, Dhian Singh was made Officer of the Royal Deodhi, a rank equal to that of Minister of the Royal Household. Soon he became the Prime Minister of Maharaja Ranjit Singh who bestowed on him unlimited trust and power.

The year 1820 was particularly auspicious for the family when Jammu, along with Bhoti, Bandralta and Chaneni, was given to them as jagir. By this favour they were exalted to the highest leadership of the Dogras after the extirpation of its former ruling dynasty. In 1822, Gulab Singh was finally recognised as the Raja of Jammu, the ancient capital of the Dogras. His youngest brother, Raja Suchet Singh, was also made the Raja of Samba and Bandralta. A few years later, Dhian Singh was also made Raja and the kingdom of Bhimber and Chibhal (Poonch) was given to him. Thus, he became the ruler of the territory lying between the Chenab and the Jhelum in the hills, excluding Rajauri. While conferring the Raj of Jammu on Gulab Singh, Kishtwar was also given to him by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in anticipation of its conquest by him for the Maharaja.

While the two younger brothers were required to live at the Lahore court on constant attendance upon the Maharaja, one as the Chamberlain and Minister of the Sikh state, and the other as a military commander and a polished courtier, Raja Gulab Singh administered his own Jammu Raj and other principalities and jagirs of the family, extending from the Ravi to the Jhelum. These are shown in the map facing this page, shaded by perpendicular lines. This territory formed part of Ranjit Singh's kingdom shown in the map shaded by dots; and both taken together show the maximum extent of the Sikh kingdom in 1834, before Gulab Singh's commander, General Zorawar Singh, commenced his conquests of the Himalayan regions. At that time, Gulab Singh was a vassal



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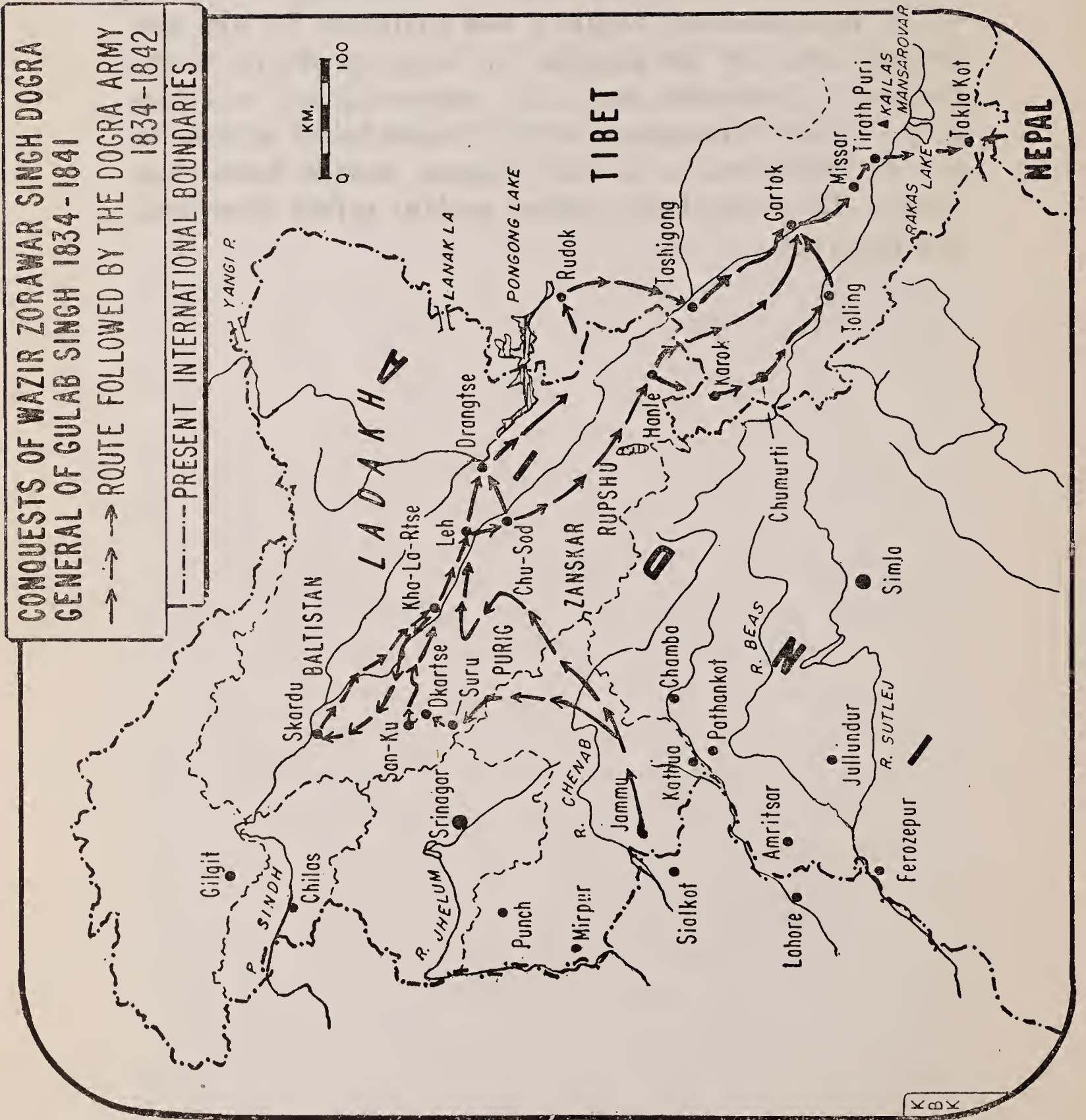
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or tributary Raja of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, possessing unlimited powers to raise his own troops and to extend his territory with simple information of the fact to his overlord.

Gulab Singh had vast resources, both of his principalities and of the Sikh state, at his command. He enjoyed great confidence of the Maharaja towards whom he was thoroughly loyal. The Maharaja seems to have given him a *carte-blanche* to act for the welfare of the Sikh state. By his assiduous services and with the help of his brave and loyal officers, like Zorawar Singh, Diwan Jwala Sahai, Wazir Lakhpat, Wazir Ratanu, Diwan Hari Chand, Sheikh Sodagar and others, Gulab Singh helped extend, consolidate and strengthen the kingdom of Lahore in various ways. He extended its eastern and north-eastern boundaries into the far off countries. The territories shown in the map surrounded by a thick black line, including Baltistan, Ladakh and Tibet, were conquered for the kingdom of Lahore by Gulab Singh's general, Zorawar Singh, between 1834 and 1841. The part of Tibet was lost after Zorawar Singh's death in 1841.

Raja Gulab Singh had raised a large army. About 5,000 men were under General Zorawar Singh alone when he set out on the conquest of Ladakh and Baltistan. All the three brothers had well-equipped and highly efficient troops under their own direct command, besides the troops and garrisons stationed in their respective principalities and jagirs under the command of their commanders and generals. The commands assigned to them by the Lahore court included about 5,000 men, 1,200 horses and 55 guns. Thus, the total army at the disposal of Gulab Singh was over 20,000 and with this war machine he was planning to conquer extensive regions in the northern Himalayas and beyond, as he practically did after 1834. He himself was mostly called upon to fight for the Maharaja and to defend his north-western frontiers, and to suppress revolts in Hazara and Yusufzai and other tribal

territories. His military commander, Zorawar Singh, took care of his conquests and acquired new territories for him and through him, for the kingdom of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Zorawar's spectacular success in conquering and subduing people of the cold countries, were very much hailed as miracles by his contemporaries and his masters, both at Jammu and Lahore. The story of his military exploits is both interesting and inspiring.



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II

Early Life

THE EARLY CAREER of most of those, who get renown in later life, lies in obscurity. Zorawar Singh also belongs to this group. Very little is known about his birth and early life. Several confused traditions are current about his early youth. These stories have come down to us through the descendants of those who accompanied him in his various expeditions and of his elder brother, Mian Sardar Singh, who now reside in Riasi, in Jammu province.

A brave and reckless Rajput boy, brought up in the traditional Rajput society full of martial spirit, he led a life full of adventure like most of the youngmen of his times destined to achieve eminence. His days were marked by the rise of adventurers like Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Raja Gulab Singh, Shah Shuja, Shah Zaman, Mian Dido and several others in the north-western part of India. Zorawar also belonged to this species of soldiers of fortune who went from place to place in search of a career, serving several rising chiefs. These adventures added to his personality a variety of experience and developed in him such qualities which later marked him out as one of the finest generals of the nineteenth century. Due to his early reckless nature he fell on adverse days and thereby fate chiselled him for greater attainments and prepared him for the role of extending India's borders to the

Korakoram in Central Asia. This also seems to have developed in him honesty and chivalry. As K. M. Panikkar pointed out "he was remarkable for his absolute financial honesty. He never accepted a *nazarana* (present) from anybody, and whatever was offered to him he forwarded to his master. He carried this principle to such a length that he only wore clothes that Raja Gulab Singh gave him and was contented with a very meagre salary." As may be expected, he soon became a favourite with the Raja whose hazy dreams he translated into "cold reality by embarking on the conquest of Ladakh and western Tibet." His honesty and devotion to duty led to his rapid rise from the rank of a private soldier to that of a 'Hakim' or Governor, and afterwards 'Wazir' or General. He was infused with the spirit of his master, Gulab Singh, to whom he was absolutely faithful. These qualities, coupled with undaunted zeal for adventure, contributed to the attainment of greatness by him.

Zorawar Singh hailed from Kahlur, also called Bilaspur, a small Rajput state in the Siwalik, now integrated in Himachal Pradesh. He was born in September 1784 in a Chandravanshi Kahluria Rajput family in Ansar village of Haripur tehsil in Kangra district. His father was Thakur Harji Singh, probably a relative of the Raja of Kahlur. Harji Singh had two other sons, named Sardar Singh, the eldest, and Dalel Singh, the youngest. Zorawar was his second son.

There is a family tradition current among the descendants of Zorawar Singh's elder brother, Thakur Sardar Singh, that Zorawar Singh was killed in Tibet at the age of 57 years. As he died in a battle fought in December 1841, it may be safely concluded that he was born in about 1784.

It is said that during those days Ganga Ram, a renowned astrologer, was staying with the Raja of Bilaspur. He was asked to prepare the horoscope of the boy. The astrologer predicted that the new born will attain undying fame, that

his stars were such as would drive him to leave his home and he would settle in some other region. He also foreboded that in adolescence he would kill one of his relatives and escape to some other country never to return to his native place.

In his boyhood he was mischeivous and the most troublesome boy in the whole village. As he grew he formed a party of equally troublesome youngsters and was often seen engaged in equestrian and gladiatorial feats. In those days, it was customary for a Rajput youth to qualify himself in such skills for the purpose of military service. At the age of 16, as was pre-destined, Zorawar killed his cousin over a property feud and escaped to Hardwar. There he happened to meet Rana Jaswant Singh, a jagirdar of Galian and Marmehti in Doda (Kishtwar) district of Jammu. The Rana had seated his son, Fateh Singh as Rana of his jagir in 1803 and himself had set out on pilgrimage. He was camping at Hardwar. One day Zorawar Singh came to his camp in search of employment. The familiar hill tone of the youth attracted the Rana's attention and on being asked about his affairs, the young man narrated his story and disclosed his birth. The youth was unwilling to return to his native place. The Rana, however, recruited him in his own retinue and took him to his jagir in Kishtwar as a private servant. Here he got the opportunity of learning the art of archery and swordsmanship in the traditional manner of Rajput youths. At that time he was a youth of about 20 years, possessed of an agile and powerful body. He also became the disciple of a Yogi there and took to the yogi way of life and decided to remain a celibate throughout his life. He acquired a remarkable physical prowess, and under Jaswant Singh's patronage, he became dexterous in handling all types of weapons then in vogue.

He seems to have left Galian after a few years and enlisted as an ordinary soldier in the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh at Lahore. Two of his companions who accompanied him were also recruited in the Sikh army. One of them was

Bhikam (later known as Thanedar Bhikam) and the other was Dharam Singh of Bangta village, in Gopipur Dehra tehsil. All the three were given to smoking in clay pipes (lammi topi) when off duty. The commanding officer, a Sikh colonel, horribly detected their habit. He used to abuse them, employing the filthiest language whenever he came to know that they had smoked. One day it was Zorawar alone who was detected smoking, and the officer abused him in the most filthy language. It was too much for the young soldier. Zorawar was cut to the quick and his pride was so hurt that he leapt to his feet and without caring for the consequences killed the colonel in one blow of his sword. He and his two companions then took to their heels, pursued by a number of Sikh soldiers. It is said that one of the bullets fired at him by the pursuers blew off a part of his lobe which in later life constantly reminded him of his first act of misplaced courage. It is believed that this incident took place at Multan where Ranjit Singh's army was then engaged in action.

Zorawar Singh and his companions escaped towards the hills. They used to hide themselves during the day and journeyed only under the cover of darkness during the night. At last they reached Kangra and joined the army of Raja Sansar Chand Katoch. Soon after, hostilities broke out between Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Raja Sansar Chand, and during an action Zorawar fell into the hands of the Sikh army who put him in chains and threw him in the fort of Dehra Gopipur. One night he got rid of his chains and jumped into the Beas which flowed below the fort wall and taking hold of a log of wood escaped to Bangta village, where his friend Dharam Singh lived. After spending some days there in concealment he, along with his companion, decided to join a party of desperadoes organised in Jammu hills by Mian Dido of Jagati in order to drive out the Sikhs from Jammu region. In about 1812 Jammu had been subjugated by Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the Sikh army resided in this place. By this time Gulab Singh

was rising in favour with Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his family had received a number of jagirs.

In search of Mian Dido, Zorawar Singh, along with four other young companions, arrived at Nagrota. They were well armed and possessed horses of their own. Unable to meet Dido they came to Jammu town. While they were resting at the foot of the Dhaunthali on the bank of the Tawi, they happened to meet the young Gulab Singh from whom they asked the whereabouts of Mian Dido. Gulab Singh became suspicious and asked them the purpose of their enquiries. They told him that they were in search of employment. Gulab Singh, therefore, enlisted them in his troops. But Zorawar Singh seems to have left Gulab Singh also after sometime and joined the service of the Kiladar (commander of the fort) of Riasi, an officer of Gulab Singh. These events took place around 1817.

At Riasi, Zorawar Singh did well. This district was then rent with disturbances. Riasi had been the jagir of Mian Diwan Singh under the last Raja of Jammu. But it was conquered by the Sikhs with the help of Mian Mota, the Minister of Jammu, and Mian Diwan Singh was retained as jagirdar. He, however, did not like Mian Mota and therefore became a party in the murder of the Mian in 1813. Maharaja Ranjit Singh therefore transferred Riasi as jagir to Gulab Singh. Mian Diwan Singh became a rebel and joined hands with Mian Dido in their efforts to drive out the Sikhs from Jammu hills and to do away with Gulab also. These hostilities were going on when Zorawar joined the Kiladar as a private soldier. Zorawar's soldierly qualities found a favourable scope for their expansion there. During the attacks of Mian Diwan Singh on the Riasi fort Zorawar Singh fought admirably well and thereby won the favour of the Kiladar. Finding him intelligent and brave, the Kiladar frequently employed him in transmitting messages to his master, Gulab Singh. On these occasions Gulab Singh first became acquainted with the merits

of Zorawar Singh.

In those days, every man in the hill forts received one *seer* (about 1 kg) of flour a day, which being more than they could eat, at least one-third of the quantity found its way into the market. Thus, a great loss was being suffered by Gulab Singh. Zorawar Singh pointed out this irregularity and also placed before him a scheme by which considerable savings could be effected. Gulab Singh, who was quick to appreciate merit, accepted his proposal and entrusted to him the responsibility of implementing the scheme. He was appointed in charge of the commissariate and effected much economy to the benefit of Gulab Singh. The result was that he was made Commissariate Officer for all the forts lying to the north of Jammu. It was during the years 1817 and 1818. He also helped his master in the suppression of revolts in Riasi.

Riasi seems to have been given to the Dogra family in 1817 when its dispossessed jagirdar, Diwan Singh, and his son, Mian Bhup Singh, raised disturbances and made frequent attacks on the town. Gulab Singh's officers, however, foiled the attempts of the rebels. But the situation did not improve. Gulab Singh finally decided to strengthen his hold on it by building a strong fort there. Its foundation was laid and named Bhingarh. Its walls had been raised and gates built. Zorawar Singh was now put in charge for the completion of the remaining construction work. The rebels, however, swarmed in large numbers and set siege to the Bhingarh fort in order to destroy it and to hinder its construction. Zorawar made proper arrangements for the defence of the fort and himself took charge of the garrison. He deputed his own trustworthy men for guarding the fort gates. He also ensured that the garrison did not suffer on account of the shortage of water and provisions. The result was that in spite of the siege for a number of days the enemy in overwhelming numbers could do nothing.

Meanwhile, Gulab Singh's father, Mian Kishore Singh,

who was at Ramgarh, sent a contingent under the command of Diwan Amir Chand for the relief of the fort. A number of other Dogra chiefs joined the contingent, with the result that a large force reached Riasi. The rebels were taken by surprise and they hurriedly lifted the siege and ran away. But next day they again gathered in large numbers and attacked Riasi and opened fire on Gulab Singh's officer, Mian Jawahir Singh Agawariah. Diwan Amir Chand rushed to the aid of the Mian. Zorawar Singh also came out of the fort and joined battle. The enemy was completely routed and escaped across the mountains. Meanwhile, Gulab Singh arrived on the spot and rewarded the warriors for their bravery. He gave a gold bracelet each to Zorawar Singh and Mian Jawahir Singh Agawariah as reward for the heroic defence of Riasi against a strong enemy in thousands. Some small columns were sent about in search of the rebel bands and thus they were thoroughly subdued. Peace was restored in Riasi. The Khasali region was entrusted to an officer, Puroh Darora, who was appointed its administrator. The fort of Riasi was entrusted to Zorawar Singh in recognition of his outstanding services. After some time, Zorawar Singh was given the administration of Riasi and the other Khasali region. His success as administrator and commandant of commissariat supplies led him to quick rise from one appointment to another, until he became the right hand man of Gulab Singh.

On the other side, Zorawar Singh's master, Gulab Singh, was also rising in favour with Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He had received Riasi and Rangarh in jagir by 1817. But 1820 was the most auspicious for the entire family when the Jammu district, along with Bhoti, Bandralta, Chaneni and Kishtwar, was granted to them as jagir and they were authorised to raise any number of troops. This grant from Maharaja Ranjit Singh gave the family also power to conquer and add new territories to their jagirs, and the Dogra family accepted the condition that whenever there was an increase in their

territory by conquest, they would report it to Maharaja Ranjit Singh. In this new grant, Kishtwar was also given over to them although it had not yet been conquered by Ranjit Singh. So it had to be conquered by Gulab Singh and made a part of their jagir.

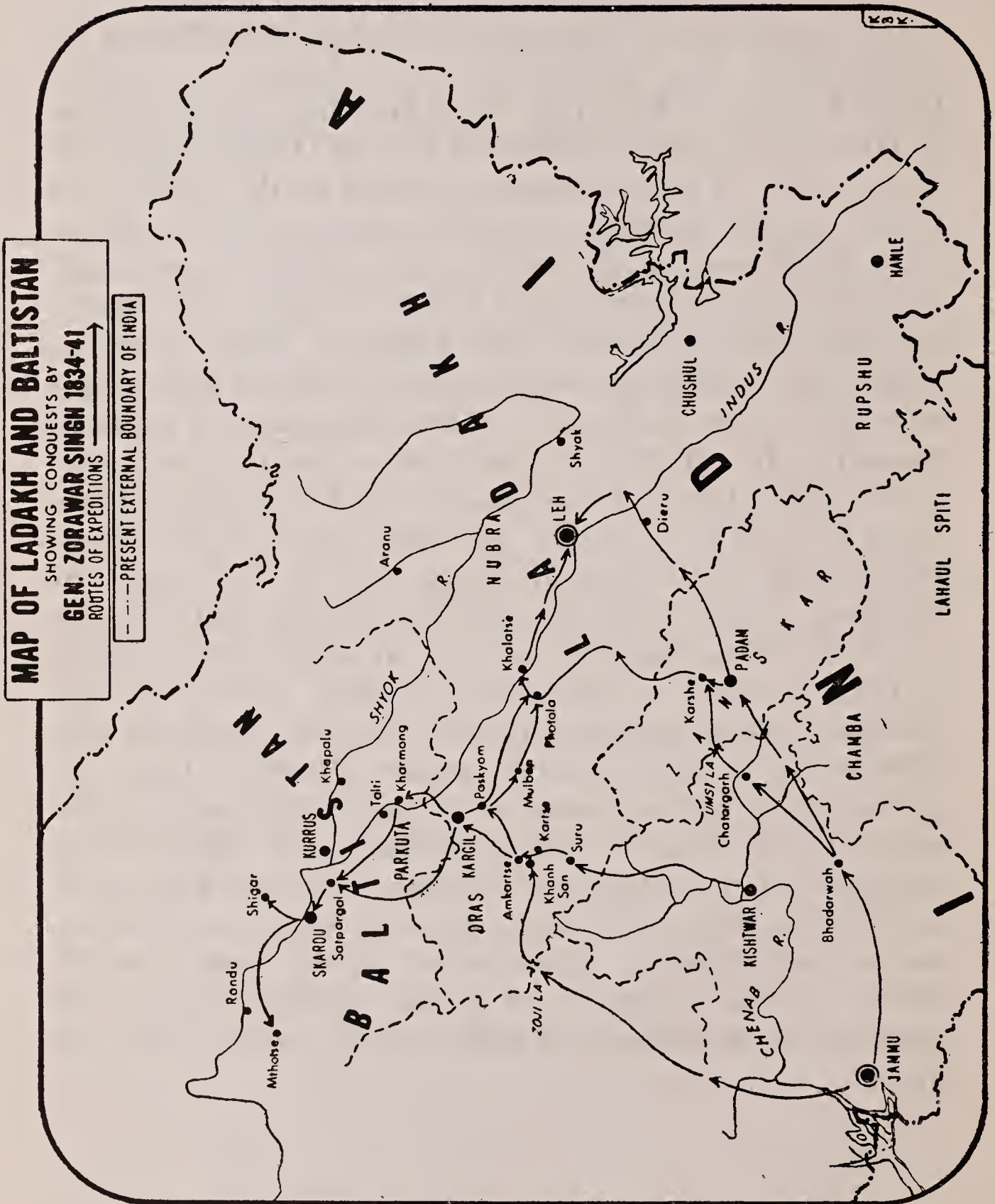
The *Gulabnama*, a history of Jammu in Persian, records that when Maharaja Ranjit Singh conquered Kashmir in 1819, Gulab Singh, who had taken an active part in the campaign represented that his ancestor, Ranjit Dev, had received a jagir in Kashmir as reward for his assistance to Ahmad Shah Abadli in its conquest. In lieu of that ancestral jagir Gulab Singh wanted Kishtwar. The Sikh chief was too glad to bestow Gulab Singh this territory which did not yet belong to him.

By a clever trick, Gulab Singh won over to his side Wazir Lakhpat of Kishtwar. With his help he easily conquered Kishtwar from its Raja, Muhammad Tegh Singh, without much bloodshed.

Eventually, when in 1822 Gulab Singh was recognised as Raja of Jammu by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Zorawar Singh was given by Gulab Singh the rank and title of 'Wazir', i.e., General. He was also made Governor of Kishtwar, Arnas and Riasi-Khasali region, with full powers to levy and direct forces as he pleased for the conquest of the independent states around. "While he was thus winning provinces and hoarding wealth for his patron," writes G. C. Smyth, "he exercised the most rigid self-denial towards himself. He had never drawn his pay from the time of his first interview with the Raja; he wore no clothes but those sent to him by his master." But he had adequate reward for his loyalty and honesty to his master. Gulab Singh took him in high favour and placed in him his unlimited confidence. Zorawar had another peculiarity. He seldom wrote to the Raja to tell him of his successes. The tributes and revenues collected by him were speedily sent to Jammu, and Gulab Singh had to discover from

it what new country his general had subdued and occupied.

The acquisition of Kishtwar had a special significance for Gulab Singh. Once this territory had formed part of the Dogra kingdom of Maharaja Ranjit Dev; hence its annexation to Jammu principality rounded off the old Dogra possessions on that side. At the same time, it opened up the gateway for Gulab Singh's further conquests across the Inner Himalayas which were to follow when a favourable opportunity came his way. Zorawar Singh and his soldiers and officers, who controlled and administered Kishtwar, became acclimatised to the cold climate and the hardy life in the high mountains and narrow, deep valleys. Thus they gradually prepared themselves for further advance towards the north and east in the snowy ranges, frozen plateaus and the hostile Himalayan territories. In a way, Kishtwar served as the springboard from which Zorawar Singh leapt on his career of conquests and military exploits which won him undying fame as one of the outstanding military strategists which India's martial community has ever produced. It was through Kishtwar that he advanced towards Ladakh, Baltistan and Tibet and made a history in the annals of warfare. Later, the possession of Kishtwar came out to be the first step on the part of Gulab Singh for the encirclement and acquisition of Kashmir valley on the north. Zorawar Singh had been particularly instrumental in these military successes of Gulab Singh. He, therefore, shares most of the credit with his master for the expansion of Jammu principality and the extension of the frontiers of India towards Central Asia and Tibet.



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II

Conquest of Ladakh

WITH KISHTWAR UNDER his heels, Zorawar could not resist the temptation of casting his covetous eyes on the adjoining Ladakh, 'the Moon-land' country of Buddhism of the Lamas, famous for its queersects and mysterious monasteries. The strange lands, Baltistan, Ladakh and Nah-ris or Naris (western Tibet) were at that time closed to the civilised world and were dreaded as mysterious regions of magic and enchantment and Tantric practices. Zorawar Singh, however, was undaunted by such supposedly formidable occult forces which could be expected to hinder his progress into the less known regions of the lofty Himalayas encrusted with ancient snows. Nor could the utmost difficult terrain cool down his fervour for advance into Asia's most queer mid lands.

Ladakh is the most common name of the country which the local people pronounce as 'La-dwags'; it was also called 'Mar-Yul' (Low-land or Red-land) and 'Kha-pan-cha' or Snow-land. Both of these names have been used by the old Chinese travellers. Fa-hien (A. D. 412) calls the kingdom 'Kei-Chha', whereas Yuan-Chwang (A. D. 640) calls it 'Ma-lo-pho', the "Snow-land". It is the most westerly country inhabited by a people of Tibetan origin who call themselves Bot-pa. Their religion is Buddhism with a peculiar heirarchy of the monks called 'Lama', a name which is said to have been derived from Brahman by its first softening into Blahma and finally into Lahma or Lama.

Ladakh was once a large kingdom spreading far into the western Tibet and including Baltistan, lying to its west. On the north, it is bounded by the Korakoram mountains which separate it from the Chinese district of Khotan. To its east and south-east are the districts of Rudok and Chan-than, now dependencies of Lhasa and once part of the great Ladakhi empire. To the south of Ladakh lie the districts of Lahaul and Spiti, now a part of Himachal Pradesh, but at that time belonging to the Ladakhi empire. To the west lie Baltistan and Kashmir, the latter separated by the western Himalayas. Ladakh is one of the most elevated regions of the world, its average height being about 3,650 metres above the sea level. Enormous mountain peaks ranging from 7,500 to 8,500 metres lend majesty to the ice-clad mountain ranges which encircle it. Its different valleys lie along the head-waters of the Indus, the Sutlej and the Chenab; and the joint effect of the elevation and of isolation amidst snowy mountains produce perhaps the most singular climate in the known world. Burning heat by day is succeeded by piercing cold at night, and everything is parched by the extreme dryness of the air. The hostile atmosphere and the peculiarly savage geographical features make the land particularly unsuitable for armies from the plains and the vast cold deserts have no prospect of any type of provisions for even a small number of invading troops. As Alexander Cunnigham writes: "The general aspect of Ladakh is extreme barrenness. Seen from above, the country would appear a mere succession of yellow plains and barren mountains capped with snow; and the lakes of Pangkong and Tshomo Riri would seem like bright oasis amidst a vast desert of rock and sand. No trace of men or human habitations would meet the eye; and even the larger spots of cultivated land would be but specks on the mighty waste of a deserted world."

In short, the climate of Ladakh is characterised by great extremes of heat, cold and excessive dryness. In the elevated districts of Rukshu it freezes almost every night even during the summer. In the more elevated districts the winters are

particularly severe. The lowest point on thermometer is usually found between 20 to 30 degrees below zero, and the mean temperature of the winter months will be a few degrees above zero. The mean annual temperature for the Indus valley is 39 degrees, for Ladakh it is 37.5 degrees, for Zaskar and Spiti it is about 39 degrees and for Purig it is 42 degrees. The snowfall in Ladakh is usually about 30 cm deep, in Rukshu it is about knee-deep but in Dras the fall of snow is so great that by the end of November the Zoji-la pass is always closed from which fact the districts were known as 'Hem-babs', or 'Snow-fed', in Tibetan language.

This climate and physical formation of Ladakh are quite favourable for wild fauna. The plains between 4,900 metres and 5,200 metres above sea level contain countless wild horses and hares and immense flocks of goats and sheep; and the slopes of the hills up to 5,790 metres abound in marmots and alpine hares. The wild vegetation is very scarce and trees, timber and fuel are the most difficult things to obtain. The central Ladakh, through which the river Indus runs, is the most important part. Here also during the major portion of the year, the weather is intensely cold.

The natural divisions of Ladakh, which also formed its political and administrative subdivisions, fixed by natural boundaries along the mountain ranges and river courses, were :

1. Nubra, on the Shyok river;
2. Ladakh proper, on the Indus;
3. Zaskar, on the Zaskar river;
4. Rukshu, around the lakes of Tshomo-Riri and Tsho-kar;
5. Purig, Suru and Dras, on the different branches of the Dras river;
6. Spiti, on the Spiti river; and
7. Lahaul, on the Chandra and Bhaga, or the headwaters of the Chenab.

Nubra is the north-western district of Ladakh. It includes all the area drained by the Nubra and the Shyok rivers. It extends for 305 km from the frontier of Balti to the Pangkong lake on the borders of Tibet, and is about 120 km in width. It

is by far the largest district in the country, with an area of 23,700 sq. km. The mean elevation of the inhabited parts of the district is 2,887 metres.

Ladakh is the central and the most populous district, from which fact it is some times called 'Mangyal'—"the district of many people." It stretches along the Indus in a north-westerly direction from Rukshu to the frontier of Balti, a length of 190 km, with an average width of 53 km. Its total area is about 9,300 km, and its mean elevation is 3,500 metres.

Zanskar lies to the south of Ladakh along the two great branches of the Zanskar river, in a general direction from the south-east to north-west. Its greatest length is 115 km, with an average width of 88 km and an area of about 7,740 sq km. Its mean elevation is 4,000 metres. The name Zanskar means 'copper-white' or brass.

Rukshu, which extends from the Thang-ling pass to the head of the Hanle river, is the most elevated district in Ladakh, and one of the loftiest inhabited regions of the world. The mean height of the plain of Kyang in it is 4,762 metres. With an area of 9,000 sq km, it lies to the south of Ladakh, verging on the Chinese district of Chumurty. Its mean width is about 100 km. The three small districts of Purig, Suru and Dras lie to the west of Zanskar, extending in length from the frontier of Balti to Zanskar, a distance of 134 km, and 80 km in breadth from the head of the Suru valley to Foto-la. The area is 10,800 sq km and the average height of the region is about 2,770 metres above sea level. The principal places in Purig with which the military expeditions of General Zorawar Singh are concerned, are Malbil, Pushkyum and Sod, and in Suru, Lang-Kartse. Dras is the most snowy district of Ladakh, for which peculiarity it has been called by the Tibetans 'Hem-babs' —'snow-fed'.

Spiti and Lahaul are now parts of Himachal Pradesh. But before 1846 they were districts of Ladakh and came under Gulab Singh with the conquest of Ladakh by General Zorawar

Singh in 1834-35. Spiti lies to the south of Rukshu and north of Kanawar. In the east it verges on the Chinese district of Chumurti. In length it is about 100 km and in breadth 58 km. Its mean elevation is 3,355 metres. Lahaul lies to the west of it along Kulu. It comprises the valleys of the Chandra and the Bhaga rivers. It is 109 km in length and 54 km. in breadth, which gives it an area of about 5,900 sq. km. It is about 3,000 metres above the sea level. Lahaul has somewhat the climate and the produce of India as well as those of Tibet. The people, their language, and their dwellings are mostly Tibetan, but with a strong admixture of Indian origin.

The nature of hazards and hardships which were encountered by the Dogra army of General Zorawar Singh are now being keenly realised by our soldiers, who, equipped with the most modern weapons and infrastructure, are posted to defend our national frontier on that side. This fact can be vividly visualised when we look at the line of routes traversed by the troops of Zorawar Singh during their Himalayan and trans-Himalyan expeditions. During the first year of the occupation of Ladakh by Zorawar Singh, the different routes from Jammu to Leh were constantly covered by the Dogra troops, who later always took the route from Kishtwar and Zaskar, in preference to that of Kishtwar and Suru which they thought considerably longer.

South-Western Road : From Jammu the Zaskar route proceeded direct through Sruinsar, Thalora and Ramnagar to Bhadrawah, a distance of 117 km. From thence it crosses the Bhadri Dhar pass, 3,097 metre into the Chamba district, and over Saj-Joth, 4,306 metres into the valley of the Chandra-Bhaga near Chatargarh, a further distance of 186 km. From the Chenab, the route crosses to Bara Lacha range by the Umasi-la or Burdar pass, 5,521 metres, to Padam, the chief town of Zaskar, a distance of 90 km. In the rugged district the road is difficult and bad. At first it follows the course of the Zaskar river as far as Chand-la, where it enters the mountains. Beyond

Pangachi it proceeds over another pass, 5,026 metres, and descends rapidly to the river which it crosses by the Nira bridge. From thence it ascends the lofty mountains that bound Zaskar on the west, and enters the Wanla district by the Singela, 5,104 metres. From here it follows the Wanla river to Lama Yuru from which it follows the Wan-la Chu to its junction with the Indus. Past villages of Nurla, Sasspola, Bazgo and Nyimo, to Pitak, where it leaves the river and turns to the north-east for a few kilometres to the city of Leh. The whole distance from Jammu to Leh is 600 km. The lofty passes on the route are seldom open before June, and they are always closed by the end of October. From Padam there are two other routes to Leh, the direct route through Zaskar and the winter route through Rukshu. The latter was taken by General Zorawar Singh in the winter of 1835, when all the passes on the more direct route had long been closed.

The Western Road : The other route frequented by the Dogra armies was the western road, from Srinagar to Leh, which traverses nearly the whole extent of Ladakh from the west to east, from the Zoji-la, at the head of the Dras river, to Leh. From Zoji-la, it follows the course of the Suru river, up which it proceeds as far as Kargil. From thence it descends to the Purig valley, past the fort and town of Paskyum, as far as Waka, where it leaves the Waka river and crosses the Namyika pass, 3,986 metres, to the bed of the Kanji river. Thence on the Foto-la, an easy pass, 3,838 metres, to the village of Lama Yuru, and thence to Leh by the Jammu-Leh road. The whole distance from Srinagar to Leh is 365 km. This route is passable from March till November, when it is closed by the vast masses of snow that accumulates on the Kashmir side of the Zoji-la, and which renders the passage dangerous, both in March and April at well as in November. The greater portion of this route which lies in Ladakh was constructed by Zorawar Singh after the conquest of the country in 1835. The large bridge over the Indus at Khallashi as well as the smaller bridges over the rivers Wanla,

Kanji, Waka, Suru and Dras were all built by Zorawar Singh. Realising the value of good communications, he took great pains to construct the bridges and keep them in excellent repair. The portion of it in Kashmir, however, was "difficult and rocky, so as to be impassable to a mounted traveller, still the most frequented of all roads into Ladakh."

The Eastern Road : The road which Zorawar Singh traversed to the east of Ladakh into western Tibet (Nari), leads from Leh to the unknown regions inhabited by tribes, through Rudok, south of Pangkong lake. Nothing whatsoever is known of it to eastward of Rudok, except that the Sokpo tribe invaded Ladakh in 1686 and 1687. And again in the beginning of 1842, immediately after Zorawar Singh's death about 3,000 Chang-pas (northern men or men of Chang-thang, the northern plains) are said to have entered Ladakh for the purpose of assisting the young Gyalpo. They advanced to Leh where they remained for about six weeks; but on the approach of Diwan Hari Chand, and Wazir Ratnu with troops from the Kashmir route, they fled hastily.

From the nature of its physical features, Ladakh has been considered a separate country but subordinate at times to the Tibetan authority; and in olden times, at least up to the close of the 8th century A. D., it formed a province of that kingdom, governed however by an independent prince as to temporal matters. In spiritual affairs, it was subject to the Guru Lama, or the Chief Priest of Lhasa. At that time, Tibet itself was subject to China, and in that condition it was struggling for political independence from the Chinese tutelage on the one side, and was fighting against the Arabs on the other, who under their religious leader, the Khalifa Harun-al Rashid, were advancing towards the Central Asia. The regions of Gilgit, Baltistan and Ladakh had therefore become a cockpit of political struggle between these three powers, the Arabs, the Tibetan and the Chinese, during the seventh and eighth centuries. Tired of this

long-drawn indecisive struggle the Khalifa of Baghdad, Harun-al Rashid, entered into a friendly alliance with China in 798 A. D. Compelled by the force of disintegration China and Tibet also concluded a peace settlement in 882 A. D. Thus ended this long indecisive struggle between the three contending powers.

This peace, however, did not consolidate the Tibetan empire. Soon it fell a prey to internecine struggle and towards the end of the ninth century a scion of the old dynasty established an independent kingdom in regions west of the Mayum pass, and extended his sway even over Leh, Zanskar, Spiti and Lahaul in addition to west Tibet. Kyi-de-Nyi was the name of this prince who thus laid the foundation of the first independent Ladakhi dynasty which ruled the country for about six centuries up to the middle of the fifteenth century when its last ruler, Letro Chokden, was dethroned by the Kashmiri king in 1470. Baltistan was also a part of this kingdom. But when during the last quarter of the fourteenth century, the Muslim rule became entrenched in Kashmir, the Ladakhi empire suffered a setback. Sultan Sikander of Kashmir conquered Baltistan in 1405 and forcibly converted the population to Islam. Since then Ladakh and Baltistan have become two rival political units, professing different religions.

In 1470, the second Ladakhi dynasty was founded by Lha-Chen-Bhagen and was known as the Nam-Gyal dynasty. This dynasty was, however, subordinated by the Mongols under Mirza Haider, who devastated this Buddhist land from 1532 to 1537, and made it subject to Kashmir for sometime. After seeing several ups and downs, Ladakh became independent under Singe Nam-gyal (c. 1600-1645 A. D.). In 1630, Singe conquered Guge and annexed its portion of Rudok. He also invaded Purig but was defeated by the Mughal governor of Kashmir and had to agree to pay tribute to the Mughals. He was, however, more successful in his expeditions into western Tibet and conquered territory up to the Mayum pass. His son and successor De-den Namgyal (1645-1675) ruled in

comparative peace. But Di-Gi Namgyal, who ruled from 1675 to 1700, came in conflict with the Dalai Lama of Lhasa which led to the Ladakhi-Tibetan War fought from 1681 to 1684, which greatly reduced the Ladakhi kingdom. In this war Di-Gi sought the help of the Mughals which Aurangzeb agreed to give, and the Tibetans were driven out of Ladakh. Di-Gi in return had to accept Islam and to agree to strike coins in the name of the Emperor. Ladakhis also lost a part of their territory. Finally, a peace was concluded between Leh and Lhasa in 1684 and the western Tibetan territory west of the Mayum pass, conquered by Ladakh in 1640, was given back to Tibet. This settlement also regulated Ladakh's commercial and religious relations with Lhasa. It was laid down that the entire wool export and transit trade of Ladakh was a firm monopoly of Kashmir. Further, all the wool of Chang-Thang (north-western Tibet), was to be supplied to Ladakh only. Ladakh and Tibet also agreed to exchange some trade missions on the basis of reciprocity. Ladakh recognised the religious and spiritual superiority of the Dalai Lama and was to send some presents to him. This custom was called Lapchak or Lopchak, or the "Yearly Salaam".

During the eighteenth century, Ladakhis played a secondary role under the suzerainty of Lhasa, and now and then had affairs with her immediate neighbours, more especially Baltistan. Probably during the reign of Delek Namgyal, who ruled from 1704 onwards, the district of Spiti was reannexed to the Ladakhi kingdom; and it was perhaps towards the end of his reign, or more probably of his successor's reign, that a conflict between the Baltis and Ladakhis started. Tse-Pal Nam-gyal was the last king of this Ladakhi dynasty which was defeated by General Zorawar Singh in 1835. Since the days of Aurangzeb, Ladakh had paid a small annual tribute to the court of Delhi, and the same was continued to Ahmad Shah Abdali when he conquered Punjab and Kashmir in 1752. When the Sikhs conquered Kashmir in 1819, they also extracted some tribute from

Ladakh for some years. But the Ladakhi king discontinued the practice and became quite independent. Although the Sikh governor of Kashmir renewed his demand for a tribute from the Ladakhi king, the same was however put off constantly. When the Sikhs seriously thought of imposing their suzerainty on Ladakh, Raja Gulab Singh had become interested in its conquest, and the Sikh officers silently acquiesced in. It was therefore left to Zorawar Singh to subjugate Ladakh.

Raja Gulab Singh had realised the value of holding Ladakh for himself and therefore he made proper arrangements to conquer it. Gulab Singh did this in order to strengthen his means of capturing Kashmir at the first opportunity. His overlord, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was also keen to occupy Ladakh because its conquest had become necessary for the defence of Kashmir valley. As one military officer, Major Hearsay, has observed : "In the event of an enemy wishing to conquer Kashmir that place could always be invaded from Ladakh side and that task of invasion would become easier in the winter" when the Sikh troops would not be able to fight at an advantage there. After the conquest of Kashmir, therefore, the occupation of Ladakh had become necessary in order to keep it as a buffer. But as he was engaged in the affairs of Sindh and Peshawar, his governor of Kashmir found himself unable to undertake any expedition against that country. Hence, when Gulab Singh showed his intention of subduing Ladakh Maharaja Ranjit Singh gave him his willing consent.

Through Ranjit Singh, Gulab Singh ascertained the intentions of the British Government of India also, as the Gyalpo (Raja) of Ladakh had at a certain stage offered to become subject to the Government of India. The British Governor-General, however, had showed his "disinclination to have any political connection with Ladakh", and in a letter to Maharaja Ranjit Singh it was explained that they had no interest in Ladakh. Gulab Singh was therefore free to move his armies into that country whenever he found himself strong enough to

do so.

This he did in 1834 when General Zorawar Singh was allowed to effect the conquest of Ladakh. He had already strengthened his position on the borders of Ladakh as Governor of Kishtwar, Arnas and Riasi. He had given proper training to his soldiers in high altitude warfare in Kishtwar as that country lay among lofty mountains of the middle Himalayas. He was only waiting for a just pretext to move into the Ladakhi territory.

A pretext was soon found in internal dissensions among the ruling family of Ladakh. Two petty Rajas of Ladakh, Giapo-cho of Timbus and Raja of Saut and Paskuum, fell out with each other. Giapo-cho wanted to drive out of his territory the other Raja who had forcibly occupied it. He lodged a complaint in this connection with their overlord Tse-Pal, the Gyalpo (Raja) of Ladakh. The Gyalpo, however, took no immediate action in the matter. Thereupon, the Raja of Timbus secretly sought the help of Wazir Zorawar Singh, the governor of Kishtwar.

Zorawar Singh was quick in grasping this opportunity of implementing his master's designs in the conquest of Ladakh. From Kishtwar, Zorawar Singh advanced with 4,000 to 5,000 Dogra army into the adjoining Ladakhi province of Purig which was the estate of the 'Thai' Sultans. The direct conquest of Ladakh by this unknown route was fraught with great risks. Zorawar Singh seems to have been aware of these. The severe cold climate was sure to reduce the usefulness of the Dogra soldiers, at least during the winter months. The barrenness of the country prohibited attack by a large army. Lack of knowledge of the route made slow progress necessary. Zorawar Singh had made proper provision for these eventualities. He had chosen veteran and experienced Dogra soldiers, who were far superior to Ladakhis in equipment, tactics and discipline.

This first move into the Ladakhi border was made in the

summer of 1834. The chief Dogra officers who led the campaign under the command of General Zorawar Singh himself, were the following, according to Colonel Basti Ram : 1. Nian Rai Singh, 2. Colonel Mehta Basti Ram, 3. Mirza Rasul Beg, 4. Rana Jalim Singh, 5. Singhe Mankotia, 6. Mian Nota, 7. Sardar Uttam Singh, 8. Wazir Hkojah Bhunja, 9. Sayyid Madin Shah, and 10. Sardar Samad Khan.

When Zorawar Singh entered the Suru valley at that time the Ladakhi officer Bkra-Sis of Sod, was in command of the castle of Kartse. He sent to Leh the report of the Dogra invasion. On this report the Ladakhi king issued a call to arms in Ronchu-Gud, Lumra, Ladakh and Purig, and appointed Dorje Namgyal, the Minister of Stog as the commander of this force, and ordered him to move to fight out the invaders.

When Zorawar Singh entered Ladakh by the pass at the head of the Suru valley, Bakra-Sis was the first Ladakhi noble to face the Dogra attack. Like a selfless patriot he collected some 200 men at Kartse in Suru valley, fought the Dogra force for two days and laid down his life while fighting along with his son. Meanwhile, the force mobilised by the king of Ladakh had moved towards the battlefield. This main Ladakhi army, consisting of some 5,000 men under the command of the young minister of Stog, contacted the Dogra force at Sunku on August 16, 1834. The Ladakhis had taken positions on the top of a hill and they defended it for a whole day. But they were dislodged by the Dogras with a loss only of 6 or 7 killed and 5 or 6 wounded. The Ladakhis lost about 30 men. They were defeated and fled during the night across the Russi pass and reached Shergol. The Dogras stayed there for the night and on the following morning advanced on Suru and occupied it. There they halted for eight days. In order to get supply of grain and grass, and perhaps with a view to winning the goodwill of the conquered people, General Zorawar Singh prohibited his troops from cutting the standing corn, and "his politic conduct was rewarded by the immediate submission of the zamindars, who came over to him

in a body, and placed themselves under his protection." The General then built there a small fort called "Kila Suru Kursi", which he occupied for a month. Thus, the most important region of Ladakh fell to the Dogras, which was once the seat of the powerful Thai or Thi Sultans. The Dogras then took possession of the fort of Shakhar. The General reinstated the zamindars of Janguri and Shakhar in their villages and made a summary settlement of the district by imposing a tax of Rs. 4 on each house. Small Dogra pickets were then stationed at various places to keep the people in control.

Zorawar Singh left 35 men at Suru fort and placed 10 men on the bridge over the Suru river and advanced on Lang Kartse and Man-ji, and to the bridge of Pashkum. Lang Kartse was easily occupied and the Dogras dug up trenches there and remained in that position for about a month.

The young Minister of Stog had arrived there and taken up strong positions. Soon minor skirmishes took place without any result. Meanwhile, there was a snowfall and the Ladakhis decided to benefit by it, and attacked the Dogras. But it was worse for them. The Minister of Stog was killed and some 50 to 60 Ladakhis fell in the battlefield. The Ladakhis, however, effected their retreat across the bridge and after crossing over succeeded in pulling it down. The Dogras, however, crossed the river next day on inflated skins without any opposition. The Chief of Pushkam fled to the fort of Sod where with the aid of reinforcements, which had been mobilised and despatched by the king of Ladakh, he determined to hold out. The old king of Ladakh had sent his Ministers, Ngorub-Standzin and Bankhapa, to collect soldiers from all those districts which had not so far sent any warriors, and soon a force of some 4,000 men was expected to arrive at Sod fort, a little north of Kargil. But the Dogras set siege to the fort before the arrival of the fresh Ladakhi army and raised a battery against it. The firing continued for ten days. But because of the stubborn resistance of the commander of the fort, Salam Khan, there was yet no

hope of any success for the Dogras, although they had lost 40 men. Zorawar Singh, who was at Pushkam, ordered Colonel Basti Ram to make a vigorous assault with 500 men. Basti Ram attacked the fort at the close of the night, and under the cover of the battery he stormed open the fort by daybreak. The Chief of Pushkam was made prisoner along with a large number of Ladakhis.

But now Zorawar Singh's advance was delayed. Probably a fresh Ladakhi army had arrived soon after the Dogra success. The Ladakhi generals, however, seemed to have been overwhelmed by the superior armaments of the Dogras, and hence they dared not to attack them, and both armies sat confronting each other. The Dogras also did not move for some months. The cause for this inactivity was the presence of an Englishman, Dr. Henderson, in Ladakh at the time of Zorawar Singh's invasion and conquest of Suru and Dras. When he reached Pushkam, he came to know of the presence of this Englishman. The Ladakhi ruler gave out that he was an envoy sent by the East India Company with offers of assistance. Zorawar Singh, therefore, stopped his further advance and reported the matter to Raja Gulab Singh. The latter brought the matter to the notice of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who referred it to the British Political Agent at Ludhiana and sought his explanation. The Agent assured the Maharaja that the British had not the slightest idea of interfering with Ranjit's plan of extending his domain northwards. After this explanation, Zorawar Singh was ordered to proceed with his operations.

These political negotiations took three months, and by that time the winter had set in. The cold began to be felt in the Dogra camp. It was probably the middle of November. Zorawar Singh and his men would have very much liked to make peace and return to Kishtwar for the winter. He levied some taxes on the peasants of Pushkam district, and then sent a representative to open talks with the Ladakhis. One full month was wasted in fruitless negotiations with the zamindars of the

district, who would not agree to the terms proposed by Zorawar Singh. The Ladakhi commanders, however, were anxious to come to a peaceful settlement with the Dogras and were ready to pay Rs. 15,000 demanded by Zorawar. They forwarded their recommendation to the King of Ladakh who had also arrived at Mulbeh with a large army, accompanied by Bankha Kahlon and four other chiefs, named Gapaju, Dorje Namgyal, Chovang Nabdan and Rahim Khan of Chachot. The king and his ministers were also inclined to accept Zorawar's terms and even ordered the sum demanded to be brought out of the royal treasury. But one of the queens, Zi-zi, interfered and prohibited the payment of the sum and said, "The Minister of Stog is of no use. Therefore, Dnos-grub bstan-hdzin (Moru Tadzi of Dogra accounts) should go and bring the Wazir's head or to lose their own."

This stiff attitude of the queen led renewed military activity and the Ladakhi ministers made use of treachery to save their own heads. They opened talks with the Dogra General, sent their envoys to him and showed preparedness to agree to honourable terms. The envoys proposed that some important men be sent back with them to negotiate with their chiefs. Thereupon five men, with two respectable zamindars, named Gola and Nanda, were sent with the envoys. On their arrival in the Ladakhi camp they were captured and thrown down the bridge of Darkyed into the river. At the same time Bankha Kahlon attacked the Dogras in the rear, and several prisoners bound hand and foot were thrown into the river. Zorawar Singh realised the danger of the situation and retreated to Lang Kartse and took shelter in the fort of Thai Sultans. There the Dogras remained safe for the four months of the winter.

During this time the Ladakhis increased their forces immensely. In April 1835, when winter was over, this large army of Ladakhis, about 20,000 strong, marched to Lang Kartse under the command of Bankha Kahlon. They halted for a consultation and could not decide the manner of attacking the Dogras for

the whole day. In the evening they sat down for preparing their evening meal. The Dogras made a surprise attack and routed the Ladakhi army. Bankha Kahlon and other Ladakhi leaders took alarm and fled. Some 400 of them perished by the fall of a glacier and about 1,200 were taken prisoners along with Moru-Tadzi, the Kahlon (governor) of Bazgo and his son. After this disastrous defeat at Lang Kartse the Ladakhi army retreated as far as Mulbeh, and the Dogras moved down to Pushkam for the second time. When the Ladakhis heard of the Dogra advance they became demoralised and retired further towards Leh, being pursued by the Dogras. They were, however, two days ahead of the Dogras. The Purig chiefs, who had been imprisoned by king Tsepal of Ladakh some time before, served as guides to the Dogras.

From Pushkam the Dogras marched to Shergol and thence to Mulbeh, where they halted for 15 days. Then they proceeded to Lama Yuru via Kharbu. There they met an envoy from the Ladakhi king with a letter from Tse-Pal, praying for peace. The letter said that eight months had passed in the vain struggle for independence, and that if Zorawar would promise faithfully that the king would not be captured, he would himself come to sort out the terms of peace. Zorawar assured the king of safe conduct if the latter accepted to pay Gulab Singh an annual tribute. At this the Gyalpo (king) moved to Bazgo where Zorawar met him along with Colonel Mehta Basti Ram and 100 men. The Gyalpo received the General kindly.

After ten days' stay there the Gyalpo and Zorawar Singh moved to Leh. The General was accompanied only with 100 men. It seems that peace negotiations had been practically over at Bazgo, and Zorawar went to Leh only, as he said, "to see the capital". With this thin guard he entered the ancient seat of the Ladakhi rulers. Here an interesting incident took place. When Zorawar was preparing to offer his usual '*sadka*' of one hundred rupees and moved the bag of money around the head of the Gyalpo's son, named Changraftan, a youth of only

17 years, the prince, mistaking the action either for an insult or for treachery, drew out his sword. His followers did the same, and the Dogras also drew their swords. At this the Gyalpo fell down on his knees and clasped the General's hands, while the prince and his followers retired into the fort of Leh. Some horsemen carried the intelligence to the Dogra camp at Bazgo, when 5,000 men started at once for Leh, which they reached the next morning.

For four months Zorawar Singh remained at Leh at the end of which the second part of the peace settlement took place in the Karzo garden, where Zorawar had his first camp. Zorawar's first act was to restore to the Gyalpo the whole of his kingdom. Gyalpo Tse-pal, however was henceforth to be considered the vassal of the Dogra kingdom of Jammu. The Gyalpo promised to pay an indemnity of Rs. 50,000 and an annual tribute of Rs 20,000. Of the first, a sum of Rs. 37,000 was paid at once, partly in cash and partly in jewels. The balance the Gyalpo promised to pay in two instalments, the first of Rs. 6,000 at the end of one month, and the second of Rs. 7,000 at the end of four months. On these terms the treaty was concluded between the Gyalpo of Ladakh and General Zorawar Singh as representative of Raja Gulab Singh and through him of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the paramount power. The Gyalpo was then formally restored to his position of the Raja of Ladakh as vassal of Jammu.

This treaty did not, however, end the difficulties for the Dogras in Ladakh Zorawar had to spend much of the next five years in suppressing revolts in various parts of Ladakh, periodically changing kings in an effort to find a satisfactory puppet ruler. A further difficulty arose from the fact that a number of Sikh officials felt jealous of the Dogra attainments and therefore tried to thwart their frontier conquests and seemed to have excited the Ladakhis to revolt against the Dogra occupation.

After a stay of four months in Leh Zorawar Singh left the place leaving behind Munshi Daya Ram as representative

of the Jammu Sarkar in the Darbar of the Gyalpo. He withdrew all his forces to Lama Yuru. At this place he received the information that the chief of Sod had rebelled, marched against the Dogra fort at Suru, captured it, and had put to death the whole Dogra garrison of 55 men. By forced marches the General reached Sod. The rebels had already dispersed. He therefore halted there for 15 days. Thence he marched to Suru and reached there in two days, a distance of about 21 km. There he surprised the Ladakhis by a night attack. Thirteen men of the enemy, who fell into his hands, were hanged on the trees, while by promising of Rs. 50 per person, the Dogras obtained 200 prisoners who were at once beheaded. The anger of the conqueror was, however, soon quenched by the submission of all the zamindars of the region.

Here it was discovered that this rebellion had been caused by Mian Singh, the Sikh governor of Kashmir, who had secretly sent his own servant, named Fateh Singh Jogi, with 50 men to the assistance of the rebels of Suru and Sod. Mian Singh's involvement in this affair was due, besides the usual jealousy of the courtiers, to the fact that the supply of shawl wool to Kashmir had much decreased due to the Dogra conquest of Ladakh. It was now directed from Ladakh to Jammu and the Punjab via Kishtwar.

Ranjit Singh himself had long desired to conquer Ladakh, but he was now contented that his vassals, the Dogra Rajas, had accomplished this conquest. He was satisfied when Gulab Singh's brother, Raja Dhian Singh, who was Ranjit Singh's Prime Minister, presented him with the Ladakhi tribute of Rs. 30,000 brought by General Zorawar Singh. He also received the General with kindness and approbation along with a deputation from the Gyalpo of Ladakh. He thus recognised Gulab Singh's conquest. Ladakh thus became a part of Ranjit Singh's kingdom through and under Raja Gulab Singh, the most powerful and influential chief of the Sikh Empire.

After subduing the chief of Sod and the reduction of Suru in September 1835, the General had marched to Zanskar. The Chief of Zanskar together with all the zamindars waited upon him, and agreed to pay a tax of Rs. $3\frac{1}{2}$ for every house. After accomplishing all this and establishing peace in the newly-conquered territories, the General then went back to Jammu to report his successes to Raja Gulab Singh. The latter sent him to Maharaja Ranjit Singh whom he met and presented with tribute at the village of Jandiala where the Maharaja was encamping.

Zorawar Singh's departure from Ladakh gave his rivals another opportunity to instigate revolts there. Once again it was the Sikh governor of Kashmir. The Gyalpo listened to his advice and revolted in Leh, and closed the road to shal merchants, and confiscated the property of Moru-Tadzi and Bankha Kahlon. He also imprisoned and tortured Munshi Daya Ram, the representative of Raja Gulab Singh. This news distressed the General very much as it was winter and all the roads to Ladakh had been closed by snow. His anxiety was further increased by the difficulty of finding a guide who would conduct him by the direct route to Leh, upon which he had determined to march at once. Every one professed complete ignorance of any direct route, until at length, a man named Midphi Sata, offered his services to whom the General gave a present of a pair of golden bracelets worth Rs. 500, besides the promise of a jagir in perpetuity in the district of Zanskar. With 11 kg of wheat flour and a bag of gram on each horse, the party, under the direction of their guide, reached in ten days' forced marches the village of Tsumur or Chamri, on the right bank of the Indus on the road leading to Rudok. There they learnt that the wife and son of Gyalpo were then residing there. On the approach of the Dogra force they took fright and fled to Leh. As the General had marched through a direct route via Zanskar and Shang so the Gyalpo Tsepal was taken by surprise. He had not even a small army at his disposal because he had never

expected this miraculous arrival of the Dogras. He therefore found wisdom in hurrying to the bridge of Chushod to welcome the General. He humbly bowed before the General and expressed his sorrow for what had happened. Prince Chogsprul, the heir-apparent of Ladakh, who was probably involved in the revolt, fled on Zorawar's approach, through Spiti to Lahaul. He perhaps hoped to gain the help of the British against the Dogras. In that vain hope he died at Spiti.

Zorawar Singh, accompanied by the old King Tsepal, went to Leh, where he demanded the balance of tribute amounting to Rs. 13,000, besides the additional expenses of the army. The king was not in possession of any cash now. So the General was obliged to take the property of the royal ladies in lieu of the tribute. The Ministers of Tsepal offered all sorts of things such as tea, wool, gold and silver utensils, and other goods, in order to meet the General's demand for expenses of the campaign. These were accepted by the General as nothing else could be got out of them.

The General had lost faith in the loyalty of Gyalpo Tsepal. He therefore deposed the old ruler and seated on throne Morupa Tadzi, the Minister of Leh, and the Gyalpo was allowed the village of Stog in jagir, together with the taxes of about 60 peasants. The General however could not depend on the faithfulness of an opportunist. He, therefore, built a fort in Leh, and garrisoned it with 300 soldiers under the command of Dalel Singh, who was appointed its 'Thanadar'. After these arrangements Zorawar Singh left for Jammu, taking along with him Moru Tadzi's son and some other respectable men as hostages for the good behaviour of the new king. These events took place in the winter of 1836. The deposed king Tsepal, lived in Stog village on the river Indus opposite Leh.

Gulab Singh and his eldest son, Mian Udham Singh, did not approve Zorawar's action of making over Ladakh to Moru Tadzi, who had no claim to it. Zorawar Singh pleaded that Moru belonged to the royal line, but at the same time

agreed to depose him on his return to Leh. Moru Tadzi himself provided such an opportunity very soon. He also listened to the advice of the Sikh governor of Kashmir and revolted. He also won over influential men of Kargil and Purig to his rebellious ways. The men of the governor of Kashmir assured Tadzi to get him help from Lhasa. Kahlon Rahim Khan also listened to the word of the governor of Kashmir and joined hands with the enemies of the Dogras. After causing a widespread revolt in Purig, Ladakh and Zanskar he killed the Thanadar of Balde (Padar) and his 20 men. The revolt in Purig became serious. The leader of the rebels there was a man named Su-ka-mir of Hem-babs, who provoked the people of Purig to make war on the Dogras and to do away with their dominance. The people there rose against the Dogras in large numbers and murdered Nidhan Singh, the Kardar (administrator) of Kargil and Dras, and slaughtered the whole of the Dogra garrison under his command. The Dogra troops all over the region were besieged in their different forts. The people of Padar had also thrown aside the Dogra yoke, occupied the Chatargarh fort and imprisoned or killed 20 men stationed there.

When information of these occurrences reached Zorawar Singh, he at once started with a force of 3,000 infantry, probably in the beginning of the spring of 1839. In about two months he reached Balde or Padar, but owing to the swollen state of the rivers he was unable to accomplish anything for another two months. When the rivers became fordable the Dogras attacked the Chatargarh fort, which they carried by force with a loss of 15 men on their side and 20 to 30 on that of the enemy. The noses and ears of some 20 or 30 men, who were taken prisoners, were cut off, which frightened the people so much that they immediately tendered their submission. Zorawar Singh pulled down the old fort and constructed a new one, and named it Gulabgarh. He now placed there a strong garrison, settled administrative affairs quickly and left for Zanskar. He marched over the lofty mountains. It was probably

the month of October. The route lay over the high pass which leads from Chatargarh to Zanskar, nearly 5,790 metres above the sea level. On the Zanskar side there was a glacier extending down to 4,420 metres. Consequently, on this march, 25 men died of severe cold and ten more lost their feet and hands in the snow. On reaching Zanskar, the Dogras found that the people had fled. Zorawar Singh thought it necessary to stay at Suru for two months and wait for better weather. During this period he made a satisfactory organisation of the administration of the district. Then he sent Rai Singh and Mian Nota with about 1,000 men towards Leh in advance. When the new king, Moru Tadzi, heard that Zorawar Singh was advancing towards Leh, he fled headlong towards Spiti. The Dogras ran after him. Being closely pursued he was nearly taken. But the resistance of some of his braver followers enabled him to continue his flight. He was at length overtaken and captured at Tabo, a village in Spiti, after a loss of six or seven men on each side. He was taken back to Leh and imprisoned.

An old Ladakhi, named Tse-brtan, who had seen these upheavals, narrated to Alexander Cunningham that the soldiers of Ladakh and Purig being afraid of the Sin-pa (Singh or Dogra) soldiers, went before Zorawar and said : 'We have all come here to say Salaam to you. We want to make a petition.' Such a lie they said. The General, however, was not to be deceived. He detained Suka-mir of Hem-babs, Yis-nal-mir of Chigtan, and several other people of Purig. After a thorough investigation Suka-mir was singled out as the instigator of the rebellion in Ladakh and Purig, and his right hand and tongue were cut off.

The old Gyalpo Tsepal and the new one, Moru Tadzi, were both brought before Zorawar Singh, who deposed the latter and reinstated the former, upon the old terms of Rs. 23,000 annual tribute. However, the condition was that the expenses of the troops which occupied the territory should also

the met by him.

After frightening the people of Ladakh, Zanskar and Purig to submission Zorawar Singh returned to Jammu. But during the spring of 1840 he was once again called upon to rush to Ladakh with a force of 5,000 men to nip in the bud a revolt, which was being engineered by Moru Tadzi, the Kahlon of Bankha, and Chang Nabdan, the Kahlon of Bazgo, both of whom had been plotting against Gyalpo Tsepal, in association with Raja Ahmad Khan of Baltistan. Zorawar seized both the Kahlons and sent them to Jammu. He now annexed Ladakh to the Jammu Raj and appointed Magna the Thanadar or commander of the district, and made him administrator of Ladakh. The Gyalpo was pensioned off but was allowed to retain the nominal title and his royal palace. Then he directed his attention towards the affairs of Kargil and the conquest of Baltistan.

Thus was Ladakh made an integral part of the Jammu Raj. The Ladakhi resistance broke down before the superior arms and generalship of the Dogras. The Ladakhi rulers had no standing army, nor adequate weaponry. It was perhaps the nature of the land and the severity of the climate which worsted the Dogras better than the Ladakhi soldiers. Zorawar's awe-inspiring personality at last weeded out rebellious spirit of the Ladakhis for ever. He at the same time tamed them and reconciled them by his good treatment. He made them co-partners in his new conquests of Baltistan and Tibet, and soon the Ladakhi people came to consider their land an important part of Gulab Singh's kingdom.

IV

Balti Campaign

THE CONQUEST OF LADAKH by Zorawar Singh led to the subjugation of Baltistan, another mountainous country of the Indus valley, adjoining Ladakh in the west. Baltistan was once part of the Ladakhi empire and any power controlling Ladakh would naturally desire to possess this area also. At the same time, the conquest of Baltistan became necessary for the defence of Ladakh as well as of Kashmir. Moreover, Ahmad Shah, Raja of Skardu and ruler of Baltistan, had offended the Dogra General by his intrigues with the Gyalpo of Ladakh against the Dogras. Zorawar Singh, therefore, made preparations for invasion on this land of high mountains, narrow and deep valleys and scarce provisions. It is a region of enormous mountain chains or masses of rocks. While 5,500 and 6,000 metres is common height, there are in the northern parts peaks of 7,600 and 7,900; and one above 8,500 metres. These give rise to the large glaciers. Of the valleys, the most important are the Indus valley, the valley of the Shyok that joins it, and that of Shigar, which combines with the united valley of Skardu. This mountainous country was an ancient kingdom, composed of the following tiny principalities under hereditary chieftains, who acknowledged the ruler of Skardu as their overlord and to whom they were usually related : (1) Skardu, (2) Rondu, (3) Shigar, (4) Khapalu, (5) Parkuta, (6) Tolti, and (7) Astor.

These tiny principalities were always quarrelling among

themselves and now and then fighting with their neighbour, Ladakh. Consequently, unrest and disorder prevailed among the Baltis and the Balti dynasty itself was troubled with family feud. This mountainous kingdom since its separation from Ladakh, was usually at war with its parent state. Its rulers became subject to the Mughal and Durrani governors of Kashmir, and remained so till 1819 when the Kashmir valley was conquered by the Sikhs. Its ruler, Ahmad Shah, recovered independence and was constantly in fear of an attack by the Sikhs. In order to secure himself against Sikh aggression, he tried to win the friendship of the East India Company. During these days some European travellers like Moorcroft, G. T. Vigne, and Dr. Falconer went to Skardu one after the other. Through them the Balti ruler tried to correspond with the East India Company. When in 1815, Kirpa Ram, the Sikh governor of Kashmir, invaded Khattai, a small territory adjoining the Balti border, Ahmad Shah speeded up his efforts and wrote to the British for protection.

In spite of this the Sikh governor of Kashmir made a direct attack on Baltistan in 1831. Although Ahmad Shah drove back the invaders, he was much frightened now. When the French traveller, Jacquemont, visited Kashmir in 1831, the Balti ruler tried to win him over to his cause by costly presents. He similarly treated Vigne in 1837 but without any advantage. The British Government was fully alive to the Balti ruler's desire of submission and of getting its protection. But they were not willing to be involved in the Balti politics at that time because their Government was wedded to a policy of non-interference in such affairs. The British Agent at Ludhiana, however, showed some interest in the overtures of the Balti ruler. This kept back Gulab Singh from invading the principality for the time being. He thought it wise to postpone his attack for some time and feel his way. The jealousy of Sikh deputies in Kashmir towards Gulab Singh's enterprises was another cause for the postponement of the Balti expedition. The Tripartite Treaty which was

concluded in 1839 also confused Gulab Singh. But on seeking clarification from the British Gulab Singh got an assurance that limitations of the treaty did not apply to the north or Tibetan side and in that direction "they were free to act as they might please".

At the same time, Mian Singh, the Governor of Kashmir, was afraid of the power of Raja Gulab Singh, and he therefore "left Skardu, and the whole valley of the upper Indus, a free field for the aggressions of their lieutenants". The British officers also expressed their opinion that on the question of the Dogra conquest of Baltistan "there can be no reason for interference on the part of their Government".

Thus, when the British and Sikh authorities had acquiesced in Gulab Singh's ambitions in Baltistan, it was not difficult for Zorawar Singh to find an excuse for invasion on Baltistan which in fact Ahmad Shah himself had provided a couple of years back.

Annexation of Purig—In early 1835, while Zorawar Singh was halting at Suru during his first expedition to Leh, Muhammad Shah, the eldest son of the ruler of Skardu, came and sought protection of the Dogra General. Probably some differences had arisen in the Balti ruling family, and the ruler was to set aside the claim of Muhammad Shah for succession in favour of his younger son, Muhammad Ali. Muhammad Shah, therefore, escaped to Zorawar's camp at Suru and begged for his help in the affair. Zorawar Singh readily granted him protection but was not willing to be embroiled in the Balti politics while the campaign of Ladakh was still in progress. He only promised him help in the future. He, however, made proper arrangements for the safe stay of the prince at Suru, where the prince remained for about two years. Then he was sent to Leh. It seems that some sort of reconciliation between the father and the son had been effected and the prince returned to Skardu. But this reconciliation was short-lived and he again fled to Leh in

early 1840 and sought shelter with the Gyalpo, Moru Tadzi, whom he believed to be a puppet of the Dogras. The real authority, however, was not with the Gyalpo, but with the two ministers, the Kahlon of Bankha and the Kahlon of Bazgo. Both of them were secretly planning to rebel against the Dogras and in that case desired the help of the Balti ruler. So, they wanted to please him and win him over to their cause. They suggested to him to send a party to seize his son to which no resistance would be made. Ahmad Shah at once agreed to this proposal, and a small party of 50 men was allowed to carry off the Balti prince from Leh.

While at Zanskar, General Zorawar Singh heard of the prince's seizure by the Balti party. In retaliation he at once determined to conquer Baltistan and annexed it to the Dogra principality. A letter was, however, first addressed to Ahmad Shah, informing him that his son, who had sought the Maharaja's protection, had been forcibly carried off by a party who had invaded Ladakh, and that unless the prince was sent back again the Dogra troops would enter Balti and force his release. To this letter Ahmad Shah gave no reply and the General decided "to give Ahmad Shah lesson concerning the most natural law of succession."

By now he had become master of the situation in Ladakh and Zanskar. Rebellions had been suppressed with a strong hand and Ladakh had been finally annexed to Gulab Singh's principality. The inviting situation in Baltistan suggested the General the idea of keeping the conquered Ladakhis humoured by making them a part of the invading force and thereby providing them an opportunity to avenge the wrongs done to them by the Baltis in the past. He, therefore, raised a Ladakhi army of about 8,000 men, a majority of them being camp followers. He placed them under the command of their old general, Kahlon Bankhapa. The old Gyalpo was also made to accompany them. They were directed to enter Baltistan by the Hanu and Chorbat passes. When this party reached Hanu, it

was placed under the supreme command of the Dogra officer, Madina Shah (or Muhiud Din Shah). This portion of the army never came within sight of the enemy, and reached Skardu in course of time without having fired a bullet.

The Dogra portion of the army was led by Zorawar Singh himself who marched to Gar Gono by the route leading to Balti through Marol and Kharmang. He crossed over to the right bank of the Indus near Gar Gono and reached Pasrikhar in Saut district where he routed the rebels and annexed the whole Purig territory to the Dogra principality. He appointed Dogra Thanadars at Dras and Suru and stationed pickets under them. Thus securing his rear he advanced along the right bank of the Indus with a view to finding a route to get round the many precipices and big gorges.

As soon as Ahmad Shah of Skardu learnt of the Dogra invasion he took immediate steps to block both the routes of Marol and Chorbat. He raised an army from Kurrus and Khapalu and sent it under Yostrung-Karim behind Chorbat. He ordered all the contingents of Rondu and Kharmang to march under Bodopā Wazirs, named Ghulam Hasan and Ghulam Hussain, and to take positions opposite Marol on the Balti boundary in order to block Zorawar's advance. According to one estimate, the Baltis numbered some 20,000 men, comprising combatants and non-fighters. This force set up its camp at a high plateau, about 5 km above Marol village, before Zorawar's arrival at a place called Chehe-Thung. At this place the General had to leave the right bank and cross over to the left because of the junction of the Suru river with the Indus on the right.

The Baltis had broken down the bridge to delay the Dogra advance. The Dogras had therefore to continue their march for 20 days along the right bank in search of a ford. They had to march across the most difficult and dangerous cliffs and gorges. However, they received the submission of the chiefs of Khatachu and Khapalu. For several days they did not find any easier and

safer place from where they could cross over to the other bank. It was probably the month of December. The expedition had to be prolonged against all expectations. Winter had set in. Zorawar's men were faced in that desolation with cold, shortage of provisions and an overwhelming enemy, growing in number and boldness every day. In desperation, Zorawar Singh had to depute Mian Nidhan Singh with a body of 5,000 men towards Shigar to look for a route. The Baltis allowed him to advance for about 24 km when his party was surrounded and attacked from all sides. Nidhan Singh was killed and almost the whole force was slaughtered. Only 400 soldiers escaped to tell the tale of their disaster. The position of the Dogra army on the right bank grew worse. Hardly any provisions could be carried now to them and the rigours of the winter added to their miseries.

Alexander Cunningham describes the plight of the Dogras in the following words : "At that time the winter set in with a heavy fall of snow. Provisions became extremely scarce. Consequently, the Dogra troops became so much dissipated that their discipline was seriously affected. With an impassable river in the front, and certain starvation both from cold and hunger, whether they retreated or remained in their present position, the majority of troops paid no attention to orders, and of the few who still obeyed, none did so with alacrity. The Dogra army had halted in this position for 15 days, exposed to frost by night and to hunger by day. Many had sought shelter from the snow among the over-hanging rocks, and there they sat listless and vacant and utterly indifferent whether they would be cut off by the sword of the enemy, or be frozen to death by cold."

Realising the gravity of the situation, Zorawar Singh himself set out in search of a passage across the river. But after a vain labour of several hours he returned in the evening quite tired and disappointed. The situation, however, was saved by the enterprise of Colonel Basti Ram and his party of about 40

men. Basti Ram went along the Indus for several kilometres, while his party kept up a smart fire upon the Baltis on the opposite bank, in order to distract their attention. Though he did not find any bridge, yet several Darad men from Da village, who were with him, assured him that they would build him an ice-bridge in a few hours. There was a spot where the river was frozen sufficiently thick to bear a man's weight, save about 6 metres in the middle, where the ice was thin. They chose that spot for the purpose. Then sending for assistance they cut down trees and placed them over the weaker parts of the ice and by 5 o'clock in the morning, the ice-bridge over the Indus was completed and the river became fordable.

It is said that Raja Ali Sher Khan of Kartaksha was in secret correspondence with Zorawar Singh from the time the latter had reached Cheche-Thung. He had tendered his submission and secretly helped the Dogras. It was with the help of his men from the Marol bank of the river and the Darads on the Cheche-Thung, that the ice-bridge was constructed secretly in a few hours just below the Wanko-la above which Wazir Ghulam Hasan had stationed his large army and obstructed the Dogra advance.

As soon as Zorawar Singh received the intelligence of the success in building the bridge he ordered this party of 40 men to cross the Indus to guard the other side of the bridge so that the main army could cross over. But these men had been benumbed by their night's work in cold and ice and their previous exposure. So ten of them sank down exhausted and afterwards lost their hands and feet. Eighteen others were unable to get through the snow. Basti Ram was then left with only 12 men, which the Baltis perceived, and they moved to attack him. But Zorawar exhorted his men to his rescue. A number of Dogras gladly advanced to the attack. The Indus was rapidly crossed and the small party of the daring men, after a smart fight, was safe. The Baltis retreated leaving 200 men dead on the field and another 100 wounded. The Dogras lost only 25 killed, and

15 or 16 wounded. But they had about 500 men more or less disabled by the loss of their hands and feet during the exposure to the snow of the last few days.

The retreating Baltis were chased and slaughtered for 15 km. as far as Marwan, where the victorious Dogras pitched their camp. Zorawar halted there for a few days to reorganise his army, and to reward those who had distinguished themselves in the last action. To Colonel Basti Ram he gave Rs. 500 and a pair of gold bangles, and to 32 members of his party he gave similar presents of less value, to some Rs. 100, to some Rs. 50, and to others Rs. 40 according to their deserts. This decisive battle of Thamokhon was fought probably on February 13, 1840.

According to Hashmatullah, Raja Sher Ali Khan was in secret correspondence with Zorawar. He had also sent his troop to the Balti army, but he assured the General of his full support and of the treachery of his army to the Baltis at the critical hour, which they actually committed. It was with the help of the Darads on the one bank of the Indus and that of Raja Sher Ali Khan's men on the other bank that an ice-bridge in Darad was so secretly constructed that Wazir Ghulam Hasan of Skardu could not learn about the construction of bridge until Basti Ram's brave boys had taken him by surprise on the other bank. The Baltis were compelled to abandon their positions in haste. The Dogras got control of the Wanko pass. This made crossing of the river by Dogras easy and sure and without much opposition. Hashmatullah says that in the battle that followed, Wazir Ghulam Hasan was killed along with about 2,000 of his men. Wazir Ghulam Hussain and Wazir Sultan Beg of Rondu had escaped from the battlefield. But the chasing Dogras overtook and killed them before they could reach Marol. As assured by Raja Ali Sher Khan, his men withdrew from the battlefield before the action started. He thus kept his word with the Dogras, and in recognition of these services, his principality was left to him and he was retained as its Raja.

In short, after his remarkable success in the battlefield of Thomokhon, Zorawar Singh entered Marol in triumph. But he did not rest there. He continued pursuing the fugitives and reached Hamza-gond where another action was fought. But the Balti resistance was feeble and was easily broken with the help of the people of Kharmang who had now realised the uselessness of opposing the Dogras and transferred their loyalty to them and fought for them with open heart.

Zorawar Singh halted at Kharmang to receive the submission of the surrounding chiefs. Ali Sher Khan of Kartaksho waited upon him and he was warmly received by the General. Through his good offices, Raja Ahmad Khan of Tolti and the Wazir of Parkuta, tendered their submission and won Zorawar's protection for themselves and for their people. Zorawar then marched from Kharmang and reached Gol in four days. At that place the Ladakhi army which had advanced over Hanola through Chorbat and Khapalu, also joined him. The united army now marched towards the stronghold of Skardu, the seat of the Balti rulers, and the ultimate target of the Dogra invasion.

The advance, however, was not an easy one. The Balti ruler, Raja Ahmad Shah, had blocked every route, and his Wazir, Yostrung-Karim, had posted his troops at every pass. However, Zorawar Singh's success at Thamokhon and Kharmang had caused dissensions among the Balti Rajas. Daulat Khan of Khapalu won favour of Zorawar Singh by timely submission and through his cousin, Haidar Khan, deceived Yostrung-Karim by his feigned loyalty towards Ahmad Shah. Haider Khan made him divide his army in two columns, one under him with a view to attacking the advancing Dogras on two fronts. He moved his column apparently against the Dogras but actually he led it direct in the service of Zorawar Singh and tendered submission on the part of Daulat Ali Khan and thus won favour of Zorawar Singh for his master, the Raja of Khapalu, who had been deposed by Ahmad Shah, the Balti ruler. He also sent

a message to Yostrung-Karim informing him of the submission of Daulat Ali Khan and called upon him to acknowledge the latter their Raja as it would be in their interest. By Haider Khan's change of loyalty, the whole of the contingent sent to fight against Zorawar Singh, went over to Raja Daulat Ali Khan. The people of Khapalu also declared their submission. Daulat Ali Khan, therefore, entered Khapalu in triumph with the aid of the people, occupied the fort and submitted before the Dogras. Yostrung-Karim smelt the danger to his position and left Poen in haste and entrenched himself in Kurrus. There he delayed the advance of the Ladakhi column for a couple of days. But as soon as he received the information of the arrival of Zorawar Singh at Parkuta, he was frightened out of his wits and left the fort in haste, crossed to the other side of the Indus, fled towards Gol and reached Skardu. Meanwhile, Khurram Khan, Raja of Kurrus, joined the Ladakhi column and accompanied it to Gol, where he tendered his submission to Zorawar Singh.

These developments facilitated Zorawar's conquest of Skardu and he now reached that place without further opposition. All the petty chiefs as well as Doghoni-pa Bono, a Wazir of the Raja of Skardu, were in attendance on Zorawar Singh. The Dogras now set siege to the fort of Skardu, called Khar-poche, in which Raja Ahmad Shah had shut himself up. The Khar-poche fort was known for its strength on account of its location on a lofty, unapproachable rock or hillock. Skardu town itself is situated in a plain, 2,270 metres above the sea, just at the foot of one of the two rocks. The rock on which the fort of Khar-poche was located, rises to 305 metres above the town. The palace of the Raja of Skardu stood at the edge of the plateau, where the rock rises from it. This palace was pulled down by the Dogras after storming the fort. The 305 metres high rock itself was the stronghold on which the fort was built at its south-east end, at a part very steep and difficult of access. The fort had only two gates, one on the east side meant

for daily traffic, the other on the west from which a covered path descended to the river and the spring for bringing water for the inmates. The usual road on the east was a narrow, zigzag sharp ascent, and its whole length was in the range of fire from a tower on the western gate. On the higher part of the rock was a smaller fort in a position very difficult to reach from below.

The storming of this impregnable stronghold was a unique achievement of Zorawar Singh's generalship. He set siege to it and blockaded all roads of access. But no direct assault could be effected due to its peculiarly precipitous position. Hence a fortnight of blockade achieved nothing and the besieged showed no weakness. A longer siege was not desirable in view of the shortage of provisions in that region. Zorawar Singh, therefore, decided to press heroism and chivalry into action. He planned to carry the fort by assault fraught with great risks. One dark night he stealthily sent his men round from their position in front of the main fort to the south-western corner of the rock. Surprising the guards posted there, they climbed the hill. There was some fighting but the Dogras succeeded in taking the small fort near the summit. This success gave the Dogras a position of strength and superiority over the main fort which was a little below. In the morning they began firing down on the main fort. After two or three hours, the Raja and his people took to flight and the place was conquered. All the garrison, with the exception of a few who escaped across the river, were either killed or captured. The Raja, too, was taken prisoner. The task of the conquest of the chief place of Baltistan thus came to a triumphant termination. It was an action of exceptional bravery and hazards. "This deed was boldly done by the Dogras," writes Frederic Drew. "It resembled somewhat, on a small scale, the capture of Quebec by the English. The strength of the position was such that it should never have been taken except by blockade and starvation."

The fort of Khar-poche and the palace of Almad Shah were

pulled down and levelled to the ground. All his property in gold, jewellery and cloth was taken away as war indemnity, valued at about Rs. 2 lakh, according to Hashmatullah. A large quantity of provisions and many weapons fell into the hands of the Dogras, who, according to their custom, built a new fort on the other rock "less dependant for its security on advantage of position."

Then followed punishment to the offending people. Kahlon Rahim Khan of Chigtan, who had excited the revolt in Purig met a pathetic end. He had escaped to Skardu and thence to Rondu. He was about to escape to Gilgit when he was captured and brought before the infuriated General who made him a special target of his wrath. He was mercilessly mutilated in the presence of a crowd of Baltis and their chiefs, and was left in the field neglected and bleeding. He cried in pain and suffering and died after two days. Another chief, Hussain of Pashkyum, received similar punishment, but survived the operation and the boiling oil application. The General seems to have inflicted such harsh punishment to avenge the merciless killing of the Dogra garrisons by Ladakhis in Purig and Zanskar and also "to warn the Baltis against future revolutions," and to show to the people at Skardu what their punishment would be in case they defied the Dogra authority.

By now several petty chiefs of Baltistan had submitted willingly to the Dogras. The Rajas of Khapalu, Tolti, Kartaksho and Kurrus had tendered their submission to the General. After the victory of Tahmokhon and the occupation of Skardu, the whole of Baltistan had been practically conquered by Zorawar Singh. The Baltis were demoralised and found wisdom in silent submission. Hence Haider Khan, Raja of Shigar, and the chiefs of Chorbat willingly acknowledged the Dogra overlordship. Only Raja Ali Khan of Rondu and Raja Jabbar Khan of Astor failed to present themselves before the conqueror. It took Zorawar Singh a little more to settle the affairs at Skardu before he could take any action against these defiant

chiefs. He then sent about 1,000 Dogras in command of Mirza Rasul Beg and Muhammad Khan, and another Balti army, under Dogra officers and chiefs of Kharmang, for ravaging the Rondu territory. As soon as these columns reached Mahndi, the fort of Rondu, Raja Ali Khan fled away and the place was occupied by the Dogras without any opposition. Afterwards, Raja Ali Khan tendered his submission, and the Rondu principality was confirmed on him on payment of Rs. 15,000 as war indemnity.

After the occupation of Rondu, Zorawar Singh sent a mixed column of 500 Dogras and some Baltis under the command of Madin Shah to conquer Astor. As soon as the column reached Astor, Raja Jabbar Khan shut himself up in the fort. The Dogras set siege to it, which continued for 20 days at the end of which period the Raja was compelled to surrender due to the shortage of water. Madin Shah occupied Astor and brought Jabbar Khan before Zorawar Singh who kept him a close prisoner near him. But at this stage the Sikh governor of Kashmir disputed his prior claim on Astor. Jabbar Khan was, therefore, released and allowed to possess Astor, and Zorawar recalled his troops from that region.

As a final settlement of Baltistan, Zorawar Singh put in confinement Wazir Hussain of Gol, and shortly afterwards deposed Ahmad Shah. In his place, his eldest son, Muhammad Shah, was made Raja of that place on the promised payment of an annual tribute of Rs. 7,000. This arrangement was made in the beginning of 1840.

But the astute General, who had benefitted by his experience in Ladakh, would not repeat the mistake of entrusting his hard-won conquest to the doubtful faith of a son of Ahmad Shah. He garrisoned the new fort on the bank of the Indus, with his own soldiers, so as to ensure faithfulness of the new king. As an insurance against revolts, he carried off Ahmad Shah and his favourite son as prisoners to Ladakh.

By the summer of 1840, Zorawar had effected the occupation and submission of all the valleys and heights of Baltistan. He had secured Skardu, assured its occupation by constructing and garrisoning a new fort. At Kharmang also he raised a strong fort, a part of which he completed during his stay there. He appointed Bhagwan Singh as its Thanadar, with a picket of 100 Dogras under him. Bhupat and Mukhtiar Munshi were appointed to assist him in administration of the territory.

After making satisfactory arrangement for keeping a stronghold on Baltistan, Zorawar Singh packed up and marched back to Ladakh. During his stay at Skardu he had made up his mind to conquer western Tibet and for that purpose he had raised a Balti army which he led to Ladakh. All the Balti chiefs also accompanied the army. Raja Sher Ali Khan joined him with contingents from Kharmang and Tolti. Raja Daulat Ali Khan of Khapalu also offered to accompany him in person on the proposed expedition. While at Khapalu, the dreaded epidemic of smallpox broke out in the camp. It took a heavy toll of life, particularly of the Ladakhi soldiers. Among the chiefs, the Kahlon of Bankhapa was the first victim of the disease. The old Gyalpo, Tanduf Namgyal, already broken in health and spirit on account of adversity, also died of the disease. His dead body was carried to Leh and his last rites were performed at his palace in Stog with all the royal honours.

Zorawar Singh reached Leh, probably towards the end of June 1840 through Khapalu, Chorbat and Numra. Immediately on arrival there he sent for the surviving successor of the Gyalpo, a boy of about ten years, named Jigsmad Namgyal, grandson of the deceased. He seated the boy on his grandfather's throne and recognised him as the nominal ruler of Ladakh, as vassal of Lahore through Raja Gulab Singh. Thus was completed the conquest of Ladakh and Baltistan by General Zorawar Singh through a process of conquest and reconquest over a period of more than six years. By his efforts, a territory much larger than Kashmir was added to the Dogra

domain. If the jealousy of the Sikh governor of Kashmir had not stood in his way, he could have pushed his conquests far into the Gilgit territory. But obstructed in that quarter, Zorawar's martial genius led him to undertake the conquest of Lhasa territory.

V

Conquest of Tibetan Regions

ZORAWAR SINGH'S CONQUEST of Ladakh and Baltistan brought the Dogra principality of Jammu to the neighbourhood of Central Asia and Tibet. It also uncovered new political fields for the Sikh state of Lahore which was seeking expansion through the efforts of its vassal, Raja Gulab Singh. The Sikh state had been surrounded by the British on all sides, except on the north and north-east. It was, therefore, isolated and left without friends and was constantly in danger of British invasion. The only field left for Lahore kingdom for expansion was on the north and east of Ladakh. It was also in this direction that they could hope to make allies, particularly with Nepal, which country could be approached only from that side. Nepal was the only surviving independent Hindu kingdom which could be expected to help Lahore in the hour of need. Both the countries were already in correspondence and contact with each other through their representatives. But Nepal could be reached only by the conquest of the intervening territory of western Tibet, over which the Dogras could assert claim as being part of the once extensive Ladakhi kingdom. The Sikhs, no doubt "tried to march with Nepal behind the Himalayas" through the efforts of Gulab Singh.

The more important cause for the Dogra invasion of Tibet was perhaps the Dogra diplomacy of strengthening their own position in their own territories. This was necessary for the



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achievement of independence whenever opportunity for this presented itself. After the death of Ranjit Singh in 1839, the influence of Gulab Singh and his brothers, Dhian Singh and Suchet Singh, at the Lahore Darbar was on the wane. Most of the courtiers of Lahore were becoming anti-Dogra. The conflict of parties at Lahore was becoming bloody. It was feared that the Dogras might be ousted from power. This anti-Dogra move was partly an outcome of the Anglo-Dogra rivalry in the politics of Lahore. Gulab Singh and his companions were opposed to all type of British influence in the Sikh state and they did not like British interference in the Lahore affairs. In this connection Captain J. D. Cunningham pertinently observed : "Neither the minister (Raja Dhian Singh) nor his brother (Raja Gulab Singh) had ever been thought well pleased with English interference in the affairs of Punjab; they were at the time in suspicious communication with Nepal..."

The British were also in constant dread of the growing power and influence of Raja Gulab Singh and they always tried to forestall him in his ambition, and opposed any aggrandisement in his power and new addition to his charges. The British were thus intriguing against the Dogras and seeking to check and subvert their influence and power at Lahore. Raja Gulab Singh was aware of this situation. He also knew that there was a secret intrigue going on for weakening the Dogra hold on the administration of the Lahore kingdom and to do away with their influence. Maharaja Sher Singh himself was encouraging such activities against the Dogras and he heeded the advice of the British authorities in raising the Sindhanwalia chiefs against the Dogras.

Raja Gulab Singh realised that the days of the supremacy and influence of the Dogra chiefs were drawing to a close. He, therefore, thought it necessary to counteract this by establishing a direct contact with Nepal, and this could be achieved by annexing the Tibetan territories which lay between the two

countries. Thus the attempt to conquer Tibet was an act of Raja Gulab Singh in pursuance of his objective of creating a hill kingdom for himself and thus providing against adverse days which were ahead. In the prosecution of this policy "he had during 1840 and 1841", observed Mr. Edwards, "annexed Iskardu, made Gilgit tributary, opened squabbles with Yarkand, seized Garoo in Chinese Tibet (thus monopolising the trade in shawl wool), and made the frontier of Jammu coterminous with that of the Goorkhas in Nepal, no great friends of the British empire in India."

Apart from the diplomatic and commercial interests, the territories of western Tibet offered to the Dogras another incentive for conquest, which also served as immediate cause of the invasion. Up to the reign of Singge Namgyal in Ladakh (1600-645) the region of western Tibet formed a part of the Ladakhi kingdom. As a result of the Ladakhi-Tibetan war of 1684, Singge had to cede these territories, from the borders of present Ladakh up to the Maryum pass, to Lhasa. Zorawar Singh could therefore assert Ladakhi claims on these Tibetan territories which lie to the east and south-east of Ladakh, and are known as Rudok, Chang-Thang (Shan-than) and Naris.

Rudok lies immediately to the east of Ladakh and Rukshu, along the northern border of the lake Pang-kong which stretches through the whole length of the country from east to west, a distance of about 128 km. The province is beside the valley of Chushul, from which the capital, or fort of Rudok, was at a distance of three to four days' journey. The fort itself was situated on the hill in the midst of an extensive plain, about 32 km. south-east from the extremity of the Pang-kong lake. The mean height of the plain is probably not under 4,420 metres. It was inhabited chiefly by shepherds who subsisted by the sale of their wool to the merchants at Leh. The province was subject to the authority of the Garphon (governor) of Chan-than.

In the south and east of Rudok lay the larger division of Chan-than which was in contact with Ladakh, on the line of the Indus river. It included the two smaller districts of Chumurti and Garo (also called Gardokh or Gartokh). The monastery of Tashigong was the chief place in these districts. Garo itself was little else than an encampment, consisting of a number of blanket-tents, with a few houses of unburnt bricks, like the houses in Ladakh. Chan-than was formerly subject to independent princes under the Dalai Lama of Lhasa. But in 1792 the Gurkhas having invaded the southern provinces, the Dalai Lama called the Chinese to his aid. The Chinese drove back the Gurkhas, but took the opportunity of establishing their own power in Tibet. Afterwards two Chinese officers, called Ambans sent from Peking, used to reside permanently at Lhasa and run the administration of the state. From Lhasa two officers were sent to Garphons.

Ngari or Naris lay to the south of the Indus river and embraced the whole of the upper valley of the Sutlej river from the Manasarovar lake to the crest of the Porgyal mountain, adjoining Spiti, Bashahr and Kanawar territories of Himachal Pradesh. It was sub-divided into three smaller districts of Guge, Gangri and Purang. Guge was the largest of the three, and contained the well-known towns of Tholing and Tsaparang. Gangri was the country around the holy lakes, the Purang is the upper valley of the Gogra river.

Chan-than was the chief resort of the Pashmina goat, and was also the pasturage of numerous flocks of sheep. The wool of Chan-than was sold to the Ladakhis alone by virtue of an ancient agreement. Gulab Singh's one object was to get control of this lucrative wool trade. Previously this wool used to be sent to Ladakh but the Dogra conquest of Ladakh diverted the trade to the factories of Bashahr. Now it became necessary to conquer the lands producing this wool in order to monopolise its trade. So "with Ladakh in his hands all he needed to achieve

a monopoly of the coveted wool trade was to annex those areas of Tibet from which wool came."

Zorawar Singh wanted to give employment to the people of the newly-conquered Ladakh and Baltistan and thus to divert their thoughts from rebellions. He also was sure that he had become adept in high altitude warfare and could make a mark in history by conquering the mountainous countries which no armies of India had subdued up to that time. He even thought of invading Yarkand and Kashghar. But the Lhasan provinces seemed to be more accessible, and about these he had been told that these belonged to Ladakh only some 60 years ago. The Dogra General, therefore, thought of reviving the old claims of Ladakh to these districts and back his claims by the force of arms.

In 1841, the time seemed favourable for Gulab Singh to send Zorawar Singh on conquest of these territories. At that time the Sikh kingdom of Lahore had been shaken to its foundations by internal dissensions. The British Government of India was busy in saving their face in Afghanistan and Burma where hostilities were going on. The Chinese were resisting the British attempts to sell opium to China, which the traders of the East India Company sought to force on her. Similarly, Nepal, which was once a great power, was divided by factional struggles. "In Tibet itself, there was considerable turmoil arising from a power struggle between the Regent of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Ministers."

Taking advantage of these events, Zorawar Singh made ready to move his forces into Naris, the region of Tibet to the west of the Mayum pass. To provide him with a pretext for mobilisation he revived claims to these territories in the capacity of the master of Ladakh which once ruled over Naris. He wrote to the Garphon (governor) of these districts not to supply pashmina wool to any other area except Ladakh, and he also demanded tribute from him. But the Garphon sent only

five horses and five mules. The Dogra General was offended at this, and he ordered his forces to move into Naris to occupy it for Gulab Singh.

Soon the news of this move flashed around, although the contemplated attack on western Tibet had been kept very secret. The British officers received the first information of some fight having taken place between the troops of Zorawar Singh and the militia of Bashahr at some place near the frontier of Ladakh. They also were informed of the designs of Zorawar Singh on Kanawar and Rudok. A month later, in July, the commissioner of Kumaon district received a report from the Rawal of Badrinath about the capture of Gartok by a Dogra force and the defeat of the Tibetans at their hands. The British Resident at Kathmandu also sent a similar information received by the ruler of Nepal. It was further learnt that the Dogras were conducting operations in collaboration with the Ladakhis.

By the middle of June 1841 Zorawar Singh was reported to have moved his troops into the outposts of western Tibet. His army of invasion had been estimated at 6,000-7,000 Dogras, in addition to Baltis and Ladakhis, a total of about 10,000 fighting and non-fighting men.

Of the Ladakhis, the greater part had to do transport work, and each peasant was carrying 240 pounds on horses, yaks, donkeys, or on his own back. The fighting force did not exceed 5,000. Only 2,000 of these were the Dogras from Jammu and Kishtwar, and the remaining were the Baltis and the Ladakhis. The number may even have been less. Most of the Dogras carried matchlocks, shields and swords. They had about a dozen small guns, probably jingals. These were probably carried by men. As the advance into western Tibet was begun at the beginning of the summer season the soldiers of Zorawar Singh wore light clothes to which they were used to in their Ladakhi expeditions.

As a far-sighted general, Zorawar Singh had gathered full

information about the military strength of the Tibetans at various outposts. He had also spied out the location and situation of important military concentrations in Naris, the region which he had planned to conquer. He had probably assessed all the difficulties which he would have to face during his invasion of the high plateaus, some 4,570 metres above the sea. He had also calculated the distance of over 640 km. which would have to be covered in reaching the farthest point to the immediate west of the Mayum pass. The most frequented route for trade between Leh and Lhasa, which passed through Naris, ran from Leh to Chibra and lay up the valley of the Indus. It ran along the bank of the river up to Garo or Gartok. The distance from Leh to Garo was not less than 560 km. or about 35 days journey. From Garo, the road ran to the Manasarovar lake, a distance of 176 km. or about eleven days' march over several lofty spurs of the Kailash range and round the lake of Rawan Hrad.

Equipped with all the necessary information, Zorawar planned the expedition wisely. In order to round off the territory which he had intended to conquer, Zorawar Singh decided to march the main body of the Dogra force from the north-western corner of Naris into the lake district of Rudok along the south bank of the Pangong lake. With a view to reaching the inner parts of this territory adjoining the Ladakhi and Indian border, he planned to send two other spearhead columns. These columns were to conquer and occupy the chief places in the interior and then to join the main army at Gartok. There they expected a strong resistance from the Tibetans. From there the General had intended to march on to Tirathpuri and the lake district of Purang where the main Tibetan force could be expected to give them the final and decisive battle.

Zorawar Singh also secured his rear before leaving on the conquest of Tibet. He also made it sure that the Baltis and Ladakhis remained peaceful and loyal. For this purpose, and

perhaps with a view to testing the loyalty of his new subjects and their chiefs. Zorawar not only sent their leaders at the head of various columns but also mobilised and armed Baltis and Ladakhis and made them to accompany the Dogra army as auxiliary force. Thus, the Ladakhi chief, Nono Sodnam, the minister of Bazgo; Ghulam Khan, the deposed chief of Baltistan; Gonpo, the steward of the famous Hemis monastery; and the minister Sa-bi, "and all other great councillors and soldiers went to make war against m-Nah-ri (Nari)," as equal partners of the Dogras. The Hemis monastery alone contributed 12,000 bushels of grain, 300 horse-loads of fodder and 70 horses. The Baltis and Ladakhis seemed as much excited as their Dogra copartners on the expected conquest of the territories which were formerly a part of their kingdom. Thus Zorawar had thought out his Tibetan expedition on a grand scale.

The invasion was planned out during April 1841 and the movement of the troops towards of Naris started by May. His thrust into Naris was three pronged. In addition to his own force, two smaller columns of 300 to 500 men each, marched through Rupshu, one under Ghulam Khan (the former ruler of Skardu) and the other under Nono Sodnam, the Ladakhi chief. Both these columns moved and entered the Tibetan territory before Zorawar advanced with his main force. The Balti chief, Ghulam Khan, was the first to lead his 300 men along the border of Kulu and Kumaon. In his religious zeal he destroyed on the way all the places known for Buddhist Gompas. He even plundered and destroyed the Ladakhi monastery of Hanle. There he dishonoured the idols and soiled religious books. He then stormed the military posts of Churit, Chumurti, Tsaparang and Daba, along the borders of Kulu and Bashahr. He was quite successful in his zeal for destroying religious places. He reserved the gold and silver objects for his master. But as a zealous Mussalman, he destroyed all the images and books. From Daba he turned east, overran the headquarters of Tholing and joined the main force under Zorawar Singh at Garo. He

met some resistance at Tsaparang and Tholing; but the Tibetans were easily defeated and their leaders were slain. The Ladakhi chief marched along the Indus river and conquered and plundered the famous Tashigong monastery town and the other surrounding places.

Zorawar Singh himself led the main force of about 3000 Dogra soldiers and advanced in May along the road south of the Pankong lake. From Chushul he entered the Tibetan district of Rudok and conquered the place on June 5, and took the Garphon (governor) prisoner.

He then moved to the south where he joined his forces with the first two columns under Nono Sodnam and Ghulam Khan, and captured Gartok, district headquarters of west Tibet on the old caravan route between Leh and Lhasa. The Tibetans had already deserted the place, hence it was easily taken. The whole force now took a south-easterly direction along the old caravan route between Ladakh and Lhasa. At a place near Dagpacha, near Misra, about a day's march from the famous lakes of Manasarovar and Rakastal, the Governor of Gartok had collected over 1,200 men from the locality and a few hundred Jukpa tribesmen to resist the Dogra advance. But the advance of the Dogras could not be checked for long. In an action fought on August 7, some casualties were suffered by both sides. The Tibetans were defeated and they fled towards Taklakot, a place about 24 km. from the borders of Nepal. Zorawar Singh marched on Taklakot in order to occupy the entire region up to the Mayum pass.

The advance of the Dogra and Ladakhi forces into Nari and occupation of these lands and military posts of Daba, Tsaparang, Gartok, Kardung and Taklakot was not an easy walk-over. These were acquired after much heroic endeavours, facing and overcoming stiff resistance from the Tibetans and still more formidable geographical conditions. The Chinese account of the Dogra-Tibetan war of 1841 which was written

by the Chinese Resident at Lhasa, reveals the promptitude with which the Chinese and Tibetan authorities reacted to the Dogra invasion. They offered stubborn resistance and sent against the Dogras large armies at the first information of their entry into their land.

Tibet was then subject to China. A Chinese Resident therefore, resided at Lhasa. A Chinese officer, named Mang Pao (1839-44) was the Resident at the time of the Dogra invasion. He sent an official report to the Chinese Emperor concerning events of the Dogra-Tibetan battles in the province of western Tibet, from which report considerable details of the Dogra battles have been known. Mang Pao reported that as the Chief of Ladakh, in league with the Shen-pas (Singh-people), i.e., the Dogras, had occupied certain areas of Tibet, the Tibetan officers had to be sent with troops to deal with the situation. In the 4th month of the Chinese calendar (May 21 to Jun 19), the military post official at Gartok had received a message from the Dogra leader that their combined force, numbering 400 men, was advancing towards the Tibetan border on a pilgrimage of Mount Kailash. The official feared lest some incident might occur and he therefore requested that the officer in charge of frontier be sent to look into the situation. Consequently, Jai-pon (General) Pi-hsi of Central Tibet was immediately ordered to hurry there and take steps to prevent the entry of "this aboriginal force." The Chinese General went there and he learnt that over 3,000 Ladakhis and Dogras had already assembled at Gartok before his arrival there. He reported back to the Resident at Lhasa on August 15 that the invaders had occupied in ten days two Tibetan posts of Rudok and Gartok. The Chinese General further added that the Dogras intend to conquer all territory up to the Mayum pass and "to force the people there to dress in their fashion and lend them assistance." He finally concluded that "as things are they will soon reach the Tibetan post at Purang (or Taklakot); the situation has become very serious."

The Tibetan reaction to the danger of Dogra invasion was therefore, prompt and adequate. General Pi-hsi gathered together a large local force, took strong position at Kardung and demanded immediate reinforcements. The Tibetan Government and the Chinese Resident at Lhasa moved in the affair without any loss of time. Troops were at once mobilised. 1,000 Tibetans, "all skilled in bows and arrows", from Central Tibet, and 1,000 additional troops from Lhasa, were sent. These troops moved to the front on August 29 and hurried off to different strategic points to prevent any further encroachment. They were ordered to cooperate with General Pi-hsi.

Pi-hsi, however, was not sitting idle waiting for reinforcements. He had worked up local resources on his arrival at Taklakot. He mustered a force of 1,000 local troops, which was divided into a number of contingents, each stationed as guards at different points, one at Taklakot, to stop the advance of the Dogras. By this time General Zorawar Singh had already occupied the three strategic military posts of Daba, Tsaparang and Gartok, on August 22 and 23, 1841.

Gartok seems to have fallen to Zorawar Singh in the first week of July, after about a month of the occupation of Rudok. At this place the Tibetans offered a stiff opposition to the Dogra advance. The report of the capture of Gartok and the defeat of the Tibetans who had tried to oppose the progress of Zorawar's forces, was received in India by the British officers in the middle of July. At Gartok the two columns under Ghulam Khan and Nono Sodnam had also joined Zorawar, and now the whole combined Dogra army advanced towards Tirathpuri along the old caravan route. Near Tirathpuri there was a place named Dogpacha, where another Tibetan force opposed the Dogras. But after a smart action the Tibetans took to their heels and both the posts were occupied by Zorawar Singh on August 7, 1841.

The most important and the decisive battle of this campaign

was fought at Kardung, where the General Pi-hsi was waiting for the arrival of the Dogra armies. He had organised a stiff resistance to the invaders with the help of the Gonpo (governor) of Gartok who had fled to Taklakot after his defeat. The Tibetan defences were, however, broken down and the defenders routed. "The fight took place against great odds," reported the Tibetan General, "and both sides sustained some casualties." The Tibetan force left the place hurriedly and withdrew to the foot of Tsa mountain near Mayum pass. After the withdrawal of the Tibetan General to the other side of the Mayum pass, a Dogra force under Basti Ram was sent to occupy Dagla Khar or Takhla Khar (Taklakot) in Purang. Basti Ram took possession of the place, built a strong fort there and garrisoned it with 500 Dogras. Rahim Khan of Chushod near Leh was posted over Spiti. All the military posts conquered were garrisoned by Dogra contingents, and the line of communications with Leh was made secure.

The occupation of Tibetan areas west of the Mayum pass was completed by the middle of September. General Zorawar Singh made proper arrangements for guarding advance posts towards the Mayum pass and other passes by posting his own contingents. He then returned to Tirathpuri where he intended to pass the winter. Thus the Dogra General conquered about 720 km. of the Tibetan territory (linear distance) in about 3½ months.

The first thing Zorawar Singh did after the conquest of Misra was to take a holy bath in the lake Manasarovar and offer a golden idol at the Kailash temple. On the mobilisation of his troops into Tibet he had already announced his intention to perform a pilgrimage of the Hindu holy places of the Kailash-kshetra. He now proudly fulfilled that resolve. Thus, by fighting out his way to these holy places and earning the merit of the pilgrimage of Kailash, to which the heroes of the *Mahabharata* had also retired after attaining the glory and fame

in the battlefield of Kurukshetra, General Zorawar Singh had earned both sanctity and renown. He had achieved the height of fame. His downfall was imminent. The Chinese dragon had been provoked, the line of communications precariously extended, and the freezing hostile winter was about to lash out with all its fury of snow and storms.

Zorawar, however, had not gone to the lake districts only for a pilgrimage. He had lasting designs on the region and desired to integrate it permanently to the Dogra domain as he had done in the case of Ladakh. He took every step to give a settled administration to the conquered people and a security to his conquests. For this purpose he stationed his own Dogra pickets at every important post, constructed fortresses and garrisoned these with Dogras. The strategic places like Rudok, Gartok, Tirathpuri, Taklakot, Churit and Chumirti were properly fortified and garrisoned with Dogras, roads were repaired, and arrangements were made to collect revenue according to the old practices. Local Tibetan officials were associated in the work of administration and they were required to pacify the local population. He also issued a Hukam-nama (order of the day) for the people at large that they should pay him taxes which they had been paying to the Tibetan authorities. He took special measures to regulate shawl-wool trade and also commerce in general. He ordered the Tibetans to sell shawl-wool only to the Ladakhi traders according to the old practice. After the Dogra occupation of Ladakh in 1834 the shawl-wool had been channeled through Bashahr and the adjoining British Indian territory. Zorawar stopped this practice. Those who sought to by-pass his orders were severely dealt with. The Bhotia traders of the British territories of Kumaon and Garhwal, who also traded with west Tibet, or 'Undesh', were also taxed as in the past. The traders who had been frightened at Zorawar's conquest of the Tibetan territory and shied to continue their trade activities were reassured by Zorawar Singh and facilities were given to them to carry on their activities.

With the same object in view, Zorawar Singh sent Colonel Basti Ram as his agent, to meet Mr. Lushington, the British Commissioner of Kumaon. The meeting between the two took place at Kala Pani in Byans district of Kumaon, on October 8, 1841. As Lushington wrote to his Government, "the Dogra dignitary" told his British counterpart that "Zorawar Singh was anxious to do everything to secure and place the commercial traffic of the Bhotias on its former footing."

In a short span of three or four months Zorawar Singh had introduced in his newly-conquered territory all the measures of administration and defence which he had tried successfully in Ladakh. By these measures he pleased the population and thus prepared ground for the permanent occupation of the western Tibet. In spite of all the British objections, Zorawar Singh was determined to annex the conquered territories to the Dogra principality, and to the kingdom of Lahore through Gulab Singh.

Meanwhile, an eminent Chinese official, Kahlon Sarkhung, and other Tibetan officials, arrived on the east side of the Mayum pass. As soon as Zorawar received intimation of their arrival, he opened peace negotiations "promising to withdraw on condition of a money payment (tribute) from Tibet." He also desired the Tibetans to recognise him as the ruler of western Tibet, and to pay the cost of the various actions fought by him in Tibet. He also demanded that the Tibetans should send all shawl-wool to Ladakh as had been done in the past, otherwise he threatened to invade Lhasa. Zorawar had wanted to withdraw to Ladakh in view of the severe winter. He therefore expressed his readiness to withdraw in case the Tibetans agreed to his terms and to pay him tribute as a token of submission and allegiance.

The Tibetans, however, seemed to be of the opinion that the Dogras were talking from the position of strength—"the invaders had first occupied our military post at Taklakot and

then pretended to talk peace with us." And, so the firm resolve of the Tibetans was that "under no circumstances will indemnity be promised as that would deviate from all our fundamental rules." This happened in the first week of November when the Tibetan winter had begun, and a grim struggle between the Tibetan and Dogra forces on the world's loftiest snow-covered plateau seemed unavoidable.

VI

The Last Phase

ZORAWAR SINGH'S GREAT success in western Tibet probably encouraged him to think of the invasion of Lhasa at some future date after he had consolidated his position in the conquered regions. But his military success caused great reaction and upheaval, not only in the Sino-Tibetan circles but also at the British and the Sikh courts. Consequently, this great event in the history of Asia led to excited political activities among the diplomats in India and around. The British Government of India, which had found no reason to interfere in Zorawar Singh's conquest of Ladakh and Baltistan, were now much scared at the Dogra occupation of Nari. Even Gulab Singh's overlord, the Sikh ruler, looked over this success with suspicion and jealousy. The Sikh governor of Kashmir found in this event a pretext to complain that the Dogra occupation of Tibet had interfered with the regular supply of shawl-wool. Even on Zorawar Singh's occupation of Ladakh some misunderstanding had arisen between Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Raja Gulab Singh in spite of the latter's "protestations of devotion and loyalty." The Ladakh expeditions had made Prince Kharak Singh particularly apprehensive of the designs of the Jammu family.

The British did not find "any reason for interference on the part of their Government" in the case of Ladakh and Baltistan, but they had expressed their displeasure by writing to the

Lahore Darbar that they were not "insensible to that system of wanton encroachment on their neighbours which has produced on the Indus a state of tumult and disorder which threatens to introduce on that river a combination of new influences perhaps to the peace of our Government than that of the Maharaja." The British had always viewed with suspicion Gulab Singh's expansionist policy and they had presumed that he wanted to build for himself a hill kingdom both on the southern and northern slopes of the Himalayas. They had concluded that by his conquest of Ladakh, Baltistan and Tibet, Gulab Singh had made his empire conterminous with the Gurkhas of Nepal, "no great friends of the English empire in India." They also concluded that Raja Gulab Singh was desirous of acquiring territories, and he was also intent on monopolising the trade in the shawl-wool.

The fear of the British Government, however, was great at the prospect of a Dogra-Sikh-Nepali axis as soon as Zorawar Singh marked his entry into Tibet by storming the frontier military post of Rudok on June 5, 1841. The British officials received the reports of Zorawar Singh's progress in that land with deep concern. A British officer, Mr. G. R. Clerk, conveyed to his Government on June 15, the first report of a collision having occurred between the troops of Zorawar Singh and the militia of Bashahr at some place near the frontier of Ladakh. He also remarked on the designs of Zorawar Singh on Kanawar and Rudok and suggested interference.

In order to remain well-informed about the movements of the Dogra armies in Tibet, the British authorities thought of sending their officer to some advance point near the border of Tibet for the purpose of getting correct and early intelligence. Lieutenant Joseph Davy Cunningham was appointed for that purpose and he at once proceeded as far as he could in Kanawar, and he also tried to go to the vicinity of Ladakh to ascertain the movements of the troops of Jammu Raja on

Lhasa. Maharaja Sher Singh was also informed of Cunningham's deputation to the borders of Ladakh to inquire into the matter. Cunningham left Simla on Oct. 11 and reached Shalkur about November 3. Cunningham had been instructed to inquire into the intentions of Zorawar Singh or his subordinates advancing on Rudok, Gartok and Manasarovar, the number and description of troops with which he or his officers had captured the latter place, the cause and pretext of these encroachments and the nature and ramification of trade between Yarkand and Ladakh and between Bashahr and Ladakh.

On reaching Shalkur in Kanawar, J. D. Cunningham got information of Zorawar Singh's movements from a close quarter and sent day-to-day intelligence of the Dogra conquests to his masters. On the basis of this information the British Government of India came to the final conclusion that the Dogra conquest and occupation of the Tibetan territories was extremely dangerous for the interests of their empire in India. They, therefore, decided that this occupation should come to an end. For this purpose they started exerting their influence on Maharaja Sher Singh of Lahore, the overlord of Gulab Singh.

From the beginning of the Tibetan episode, the British officials were afraid of its harmful influences to their diplomacy. One fear was the possibility of a Dogra-Sikh-Gurkha axis against them. The other fear was the provocation of the Chinese. In their opinion, China would not view with indifference the capture of Garo and other Tibetan territories by the Dogras. It was feared that in case of the Chinese counter-offensive a dangerous situation was likely to develop on the northern border of India which could be harmful to their interests in China and Nepal. Such a situation could lead to the impairment of their relations with China with whom they were negotiating peace settlement after the recent Opium war. So when General Zorawar Singh had occupied the post and town of Gartok in the middle of August, the Government of India

became particularly concerned and advised their Agent, Mr. G. R. Clerk, to call on the Maharaja of Lahore for an explanation of these aggressions. He was also advised to convey to the Maharaja the view of the British that he will be held responsible for all injurious proceedings on the part of their vassal Dogra Rajas, and that he should let the Maharaja understand that the Governor-General may possibly insist on the return of Jammu troops from the scene of their aggression. The British authorities thought it dangerous for them to allow the Sikhs and Gulab Singh to establish their authority in that region. The Lahore Darbar was asked to let them know the further intentions the Sikh or Jammu authorities had in that quarter. When a vague answer was received to these inquiries, the British Agent, Mr. G. R. Clerk, made a strong protest with the Darbar against Zorawar Singh's conquests and his claims on Tibet.

Maharaja Sher Singh did not give a speedy reply to the British representation. He probably wanted to give his vassal, Raja Gulab Singh, ample time to take as much territory as was possible. The British, however, could not wait for the result of the representation at the Lahore court. They finally fixed December 10, 1841, as the date by which the Governor-General, Lord Auckland, expected Zorawar's troops to withdraw. This decision was conveyed to Maharaja Sher Singh in a Government of India letter of October 19, 1841.

Maharaja Sher Singh justified the conquests of Zorawar Singh but at the same time he also committed that orders would be issued for his return to the usual position in Ladakh as required by the British Government. The Maharaja also explained that the General had acted as he was not aware of the nature of treaties between the Lahore and the British governments. The Maharaja then wrote out a letter directing Zorawar Singh to return to Ladakh. This letter was first read out by Rai Kishan, the Agent of the Maharaja, to Mr. G. R.

Clerk. It was then sent to Zorawar Singh through trustworthy messengers. But Zorawar Singh had not received such orders up to November 18, and he was "still on the other side of Ladakh owing to the fall of snow," but was prepared to return to that place in view of the winter.

However, the Dogra Rajas and their general, Zorawar Singh, had resented the British interference in their affairs. They did not relish the idea of giving up their Tibetan conquests. But they also could not sidetrack the desire of their overlord, Maharaja Sher Singh. Differences between Sher Singh and his Prime Minister, Dhian Singh, over this affair had appeared. It was, therefore, clear that the Maharaja had ordered the recall of Zorawar Singh against the will of the Jammu Rajas. As a last measure to save the situation, Raja Dhian Singh tried to seek British co-operation in the Dogra designs on Tibet. He suggested that the British and the Sikh Governments should cooperate against the Chinese and conveyed his personal opinion to the British authorities that "were an invasion to be undertaken in great force on this frontier of China in concert with the British Government, it would be very beneficial to both the allied Governments."

Raja Dhian Singh was probably contemplating a reciprocal approach to the Tibetan problem like that of Afghanistan where, at that very time, Raja Gulab Singh, as representative and commander-in-chief of the Lahore Darbar, was assisting the British in their advance on Kabul. The British officials, however, discouraged these approaches of the Dogra Rajas, and Raja Dhian Singh had at last to order General Zorawar Singh to return to Ladakh. The General in consequence recalled all his officers and troops from advance posts. But he still retained the possession of all his conquests. At the same time, he regretted the receipt of such orders and reported to Raja Gulab Singh and Raja Dhian Singh, denying any interference with the districts under British protection, and informed them that he had withdrawn all his troops from near the British

border, and that no movement could now be effected owing to the fall of snow, but that he would return to Ladakh without fail. Finally, Raja Gulab Singh also wrote to Zorawar Singh of the disturbances in Khorasan and ordered him to protect the country, i.e., Ladakh, in his charge and to report his arrival in Ladakh.

The Maharaja of Lahore and Raja Gulab Singh thus submitted before the British demand of recall of Zorawar Singh from Tibet and the latter was in consequence led to make certain military movements in order to appease the British authorities and his masters, which resulted in his military weakness and which became one of the main causes of the ultimate disaster to his Tibetan conquests.

The Sino-Tibetan authorities had become unnerved at the steady advance of General Zorawar Singh towards Lhasa. His progress could not be stopped by the strong military outposts established at the five military headquarters of the provincial divisions. They made frantic preparations to stop the further advance of the Dogras and to hurl them back. A number of troops had already been sent. Now the Chinese Resident and General Pi-hsi sent another force comprising two Jupons (5th rank officers), four Chia-pons (6th rank officers), and 20 Tingapons (7th rank officers), together with 500 Tibetan soldiers from U and Tsang on September 27. An additional force of 2,000 men was again raised from these provinces and was commissioned into service with a large supply of provisions and armaments, enough to last for nine months.

Meanwhile, as narrated above, Kahlon Sarkhang had arrived with a big force on October 2 at Chu-hsu (Dokthal), a station in Tsang province east of the Mayum pass. He had surveyed the whole situation and reported to the Chinese Emperor that the Ladakhis and Dogras had advanced into Tibet using the pretext of pilgrimage to Mount Kailas and had entered without permission, robbing the people and occupying

five military posts inside Tibet. Kahlon Sarkhang estimated the Dogra army at a little over 3,000 men, occupying the military post at Taklakot, and in each of the other four posts the Dogras were reported to have stationed 300 to 500 men and had strongly fortified their positions, occupying the territory of Tibet to the extent of more than 1,100 km.

At this survey, both the Chinese chiefs were anxious to send reinforcements across the mountains to fight the Dogras. But the winter had set in and the heavy fall of snow had blocked the passes. The Tibetan force was, therefore, unable to advance across the Mayum pass which was the normal route used by the Tibetan armies. But the Tibetans were afraid lest "a long delay might hamper an attack by allowing the Dogra invaders grow stronger." They, therefore, sought to take action without further loss of time. They at once distributed the troops and sent them to various directions. Some detachments were stationed at various strategic places to hold the Dogras, while other troops were sent to Rudok via another route along the Matsang. They planned to attack the Dogra positions both from rear and front, causing thereby the lowering down of their morale. The indemnity, which the Dogra General had demanded from the Lhasa authorities, was refused. The Tibetans thus made up their mind to drive the Dogras out of Garo.

Descending from the by-pass of Matsang the Tibetan force surprised and invested Taklakot early in November and sent detachments to surround other Dogra military posts and pickets. The small Dogra garrison of about 100 soldiers stationed at Kardung fort was besieged and its Dogra commander, Abtara Kishtwaria, was killed along with a number of his companions. A soldier named Cheru Kotwal escaped and narrated the event to General Zorawar Singh. On the other side, Mehta Basti Ram was besieged in the newly-built Chi-Tang fort and was cut off from the main army.

It was through Cheru Kotwal that Zorawar Singh first learnt of the approach of the Tibetan force in large numbers about November. He despatched Man Singh, Bhupa Kotwal and Mian Sangara towards Kardung. He also sent his family, which was at Purang, to Ladakh. Then he sent a Ladakhi corps of about 300 men under Nono Sodnam to oppose the advance of the Tibetans. But the detachment was surrounded by overwhelming numbers at Kardung Khar to the south of the Rawan Hrad lake and was completely destroyed. The Tibetan account reveals that the Dogras had been attacked from the front, while at the same time some of their "courageous men were secretly sent up the mountain from the rear". The Ladakhi force was thus attacked from all sides. The Ladakhis fought bravely and the battle lasted from 3 a. m. to 3 p. m. The force was quite insufficient to fight the Tibetans in thousands and was almost cut to pieces. Ninety-five were killed and 86 men were captured, along with three "turbaned Mussalmans of the Balti tribe". But the Commander, Nono Sodnam, escaped to safety. The provisions and ammunition stored in the Kardung fort fell into the Tibetan hands. The Tibetan losses, according to Mang-Pao's account, were only 13 killed and 17 wounded. One officer was killed and one wounded. After this success, the Tibetans seemed to have regained all the strategic points at Kardung and Taklakot.

On November 19, Nono Sodnam was again detailed with a larger force of 600 men under a joint command of himself and Ghulam Khan. This contingent was similarly surrounded and destroyed and both the leaders were made prisoners.

The Tibetans also captured four Dogra spies, who divulged the information that the conquerors had recently constructed a strong fortification at Chi-Tang, about 128 km from Taklakot. On its walls were mounted some 8 or 9 small cannons, and it was strongly guarded by a force of over 500 men. It

was also learnt by the Tibetans that several thousand Dogra men were concentrated as reserve force at Tang-la or Tirath-puri where they had set up a big camp and prepared for more conquests. This place was in communication with Kardung and Taklakot. The Tibetan generals, therefore, sent their officers with 1,100 soldiers in order to guard the route and cut off the Dogra communications and to besiege their fort. Thus, fighting continued indecisively for about three weeks.

As a result of these skirmishes and ill-effects of extreme cold, some soldiers of Zorawar's army seem to have started deserting their camp and taking shelter in the British territories. The British authorities, therefore, advised the Commissioner of Kumaon that he should provide for their actual needs and send them to the Punjab.

A large Sino-Tibetan force had advanced into the Purangz pargana and driven out the Dogras. The Dogras were forced to evacuate Taklakot, taking their prisoners with them. The Tibetans, who had now been supported by the Gurkhas, placed a garrison of Gurkhas to defend the place. The intelligence of all these events was conveyed by J. D. Cunningham to the British authorities, and also that the Dogras were suffering a great deal from the weather and shortage of provisions. They were pleased at these developments and were perhaps secretly sympathising with the Tibetans in their efforts to drive out the invaders from their country.

The Dogras had selected a place in the hills at Chi-Tang and built there a strong stone fort. From here they planned not only to prevent Tibetan forces from advancing, but they also intended to make gradual encroachments upon Lhasa territory. The Tibetans, therefore, decided to take advantage of the winter months to make a strong attack against this fort at a time when they could not be expected to be very active due to cold and when all the roads were closed due to snow and avalanches. They directed all their efforts against this fort and

repeatedly attacked it. But the firing of the big guns from the ramparts made frontal assault impossible and the Tibetans could achieve no success. They, however, increased the number of their troops and surrounded the fort on all sides. However, the Dogra garrison withstood all the pressure from the enemy and communicated their condition to General Zorawar Singh who at once marched to relieve the Tibetan pressure on the fort. On November 25, the Tibetans learnt that Zorawar Singh had come from Tirathpuri with over 3,000 men and encamped at Kardung. It seems that besides aiming at relieving the enemy pressure at Chi-Tang fort, Zorawar Singh wanted to give a strong battle to smash the Tibetan plans on the Dogras and to bolster up the courage of his men who had been demoralised by a few defeats at the hands of the enemy and more by the ravages of the winter.

On November 26, the General secretly sent one of his officers, named Mian Singh, with his men to cut off the road which the Tibetans usually took to get water. A detachment of the Tibetans surrounded this small party and killed seven Dogras including Mian Singh. The General then sent another force to dislodge the Tibetans but the same was repulsed with 16 dead. At this the Dogra unit withdrew without being able to block the Tibetan water supply. On December 3, General Zorawar Singh divided some forces into five units and sent them in five waves against the Tibetan lines. But this plan also failed. Thirty Dogra soliders were killed and no success was achieved.

Roused by these repeated defeats General Zorawar Singh himself decided to effect a junction with the force of Colonel Basti Ram, and in conjunction with him to make an all-out attack on the Tibetans at their concentration at a place called Toyo, and to cut Tibetan supply lines. The Tibetans immediately sent more troops to Toyo by night. The Lhasa troops had, as per communication of a British officer at Biyans, surroun-

ded Zorawar Singh and his forces at Misra where they had reached. The Kahlons had sent for more troops. Consequently, 1,250 Tibetan cavalry "famous for generations" arrived at the front, on December 11, 1841 along with two big guns, in addition to some guns "too old and decayed for use already sent."

The Dogra General now realised his critical position. The enemy numbered over 10,000, or almost three times the strength of his own troops. No help could be expected from the Dogra Rajas, who were deeply busy in their own affairs, quite oblivious of the position of their brave General. Raja Gulab Singh was engaged in helping the British in their Afghan War. Dhiyan Singh himself required the help of his own hill troops to maintain his precarious position as Prime Minister. The time was mid-winter, and hundreds of miles of snow-covered road lay between him and his contingents at Leh and other military posts. Zorawar had, however, sent for reinforcements from Leh and other Dogra posts. Mian Magna, Thanadar of Leh and other Dogra officers incharge of fortified posts moved in haste towards Lake Manasarovar, where the fighting was going on. But due to the closure of all passes by snow, they were unable to reach the battle field and returned to their respective posts.

As such, Zorawar Singh's only hope lay in effecting a junction with Colonel Basti Ram's troops at Taklakot, or perhaps in taking shelter in the British territory which lay nearby, as was expected by the British authorities. But all the roads had been blocked either by snow or by the Tibetans who had now closely beset the Dogras. On December 10, 1841, General Zorawar Singh, therefore, moved to Kan-rumimu-na, a place near Toyo, where both the armies met in a deadly conflict. The Dogra General led an attack which was resisted by the Tibetan General, Pi-hsi, who killed about 60 Dogras and captured a big gun. The Dogras were furious and determined to get to Toyo. But unluckily for

them, there was a great snowstorm during the night and snow accumulated to the depth of several feet, and the Dogras suffered severely, and some whose clothing was insufficient, died. As the *Gulabnama* records, "the cloud and snow had disabled most of the warriors. Snow and chill, freezing wind and frost plundered the army of its courage and strength and reduced Zorawar's soldiers to desolation and desperation."

In spite of this disability Zorawar Singh did not surrender, and he and his soldiers decided to face the situation heroically. They dug up trenches, around which there was a three-day combat. The Dogras wanted to advance towards Toyo. The Tibetans had laid an ambush. The Dogras, however, boldly rushed on the enemy and made their way towards their destination. The Tibetans, unable to withstand the Dogra offensive, left the road open through which the Dogra force advanced. They continued their march on December 12, from 7 a. m. to 9 a. m. and fell into the ambush and their rearguard was cut off and could not operate. They were attacked by the Tibetans from all sides. The same day, i. e., on December 12, Zorawar Singh received a bullet in his right shoulder, and as he fell from his horse the Tibetans made a rush. He was, however, not ready to give in at once, and wielded the sword with his left hand. But the Tibetans knew very well that the General was wounded. They made a rush on the Dogra lines, and a Tibetan horseman thrust his lance through his breast, killing him outright. Also, about 40 higher and lower officers of his army and 200 of his soldiers were killed there.

The battle continued for some time but the Dogra troops were soon thrown into disorder, and badly broken on account of the death of their General. They fled in all directions. All the principal officers were captured. One large cannon together with its mount, one large iron cannon and six flags were captured by the Tibetans, alongwith numerous muskets, daggers, can-shields and the like. Nono Sodnam, the Ladakhi chief of Zorawar's army, and others surrendered their arms

and were all imprisoned at Taklakot.

Of the whole Dogra army, comprising 6,000 including the camp-followers, not more than 1,000 escaped alive; and of the latter, 700 were made prisoners of war. Raja Dhian Singh estimated the number of their troops and followers, who had been lost, a little short of 10,000, about one-third at the hands of the enemy, the remaining by starvation and cold. He said that they also lost much material in the deep snows.

The son of Kahlon Sarkhang escorted the head of the Dogra General to Mang Pao at Lhasa, where, after a close examination, the head was placed at the thoroughfare of Lhasa for the public to view "the manifestation of the power of the national law." The Ladakhi chief, Ghulam Khan, and Nono Sodnam, and the Khan of Balti, along with other prisoners, were taken to Lhasa for trial. They were treated variously but on the whole kindly. The end of Ghulam Khan, who indulged in destroying Buddhist idols and monasteries was, however, pathetic. He was slowly tortured to death with hot irons. Ahmad Shah, the ex-ruler of Skardu and his favourite son, Ali Muhammad, were also among the prisoners. The old man was treated with kindness and was given much honour, but the broken-hearted Khan pined and died in a few months. Rai Singh, Zorawar Singh's second in command, was also among the prisoners. For his release Raja Gulab Singh wished the British Governor-General to intercede with the Lhasa authorities. His release, however, could not be effected. The Kahlon of Bazgo and his brother, Nono Sodnam, were considered special friends of the Dogras and were, therefore, treated harshly. Except in the case of a few officers all other prisoners were treated kindly and were sent to Lhasa. After some time most of them became reconciled to their fate, joined the Tibetan service and married Tibetan girls. Some 15 years later, Maharaja Gulab Singh got some of the war prisoners released with the help of the British Government and the Nepalese representative at Lhasa. Only 56 of them returned to

Jammu through Nepal, while the remaining preferred to settle in Tibet.

When General Zorawar Singh was killed all the troops dispersed in great confusion in various directions. But death was waiting for all of them. The Tibetans pursued them. The garrison of Taklakot also fled pell-mell, scarcely realising that the unrelenting frost would spare no one. The fugitives tried to escape through the mountain range, near the head of the Kali river, into the Indian territory of Kumaon. But in this unopposed flight one-half of them were killed by frost or fell off the heights, and several of them lost their fingers and toes. It was reported that a total of 836 surrendered. Thirteen Dogra chiefs, including Rai Singh, were captured and sent to Lhasa under escort.

The Tibetans had started their action against the Dogras with the siege of the Chi-Tang fort but the arrival of Zorawar Singh had forced them to lift the siege and to withdraw to concentrate all their forces to give battle to the Dogra General. Colonel Basti Ram was in charge of the fort and the district of Taklakot in the province of Purang. After the death of Zorawar Singh the garrison of the fort was completely isolated. Basti Ram bravely continued organising its defence and probably sought to prolong its occupation till the opportune arrival of some reinforcements. He had made arrangements to keep some sort of communications with the Dogra garrisons at other military posts. He also tried to contact the remnants of Zorawar's army, but the Tibetan siege of the fort made it impossible for the fugitives to reach its gates. Encouraged by the destruction of the main Dogra force, the Tibetans carefully and secretly planned the movements of their troops in order to attack the remaining four military posts and the Chi-tang fort under the Dogra control. The Tibetans did not think it proper to permit the Dogra "a breathing spell in which they could prepare another attack."

They at once set siege to the Chi-Tang fort. The Tibetan soldiers swarmed from all directions and surrounded the fort, and repeated attacks were directed against it by the contingents which were secretly sent by night. Colonel Basti Ram also tried to join force with Zorawar Singh and had marched out of the fort. But finding the way blocked, he returned and took shelter in the fort. From here he had made sorties with a view to relieving pressure on Zorawar Singh's trenches and to divert the attention of the enemy. But due to snowfall and extreme cold his attempts could not be effective. After Zorawar's death also he continued his tactics and held the fort for about a month.

The Tibetan generals sent out their troops to various points to cut off the Dogra supply lines and communications, and all the Dogra soldiers engaged in transporting supplies were killed. Then it snowed constantly for nine days. The Dogras fell short of food, so they planned to escape to a place called Chiang Nor. But that day the Tibetans received fresh reinforcements and a few big guns; so they surrounded the fort on all sides, blocking all roads of escape. In a couple of days they made a strong assault on the fort. The walls gave way at certain points under the heavy gunfire. But the Dogras resisted the attack, and more than 300 perished in the battle. Basti Ram and his surviving companions made good their escape. Chi-Tang fort thus fell to the Tibetans who also seized there over 700 different kinds of weapons. Here the Tibetans also rescued Chei-mei-pa, the Tibetan officer of the Taklakot military post, who was found buried in the ground up to his head.

The Dogras who fled from Chi-Tang fort near Taklakot went towards Chiang Nor, pursued by the Tibetans. Fifty-two of them were killed in Chiang Nor. Another 148 were either killed or captured by Kahlon Ragasha in Tun-sa-lung valley. The Taklakot area was finally cleared of the Dogra invaders and the new fort was demolished.

It is quite evident that Colonel Basti Ram, the Commander of the Dogra fort of Chi-Tang, held out for several weeks after Zorawar Singh's death. The garrison at that place did not all at once run away on hearing of Zorawar Singh's death and the disaster that befell the Dogra army in the battle of Toyo. During this short period of brave resistance, the Dogra garrison seems to have experienced great fluctuations of warfare. J. D. Cunnigham informed his Government on December 17 that the Chinese had dispossessed the Dogras of an advance post in the pargana of Purangz and stationed 200 men in the village of Taklagarh; the Dogras, however, still occupied the fort. Colonel Basti Ram and his 500 men, increased in number by some of Zorawar's troops, held out the fort against great odds and made frequent sallies so that even on December 24 the British Agent in Bashahr received the intelligence regarding a victory gained by the Dogras over the Chinese force which had advanced into the Purangz district "though it sounded doubtful."

The Chi-Tang fort may have fallen to the Tibetans by the first week of January 1842 and Colonel Basti Ram, with 240 sepoy, had escaped by January 9 into the British territory at Askot and had expressed his desire to come to Almora. He probably entered Indian territory by the Lapu Lekh pass. Basti Ram and his companions were rendered all possible help by Mr. Lushington, the Commissioner of Kumaon. Basti Ram also wrote out an account describing what had befallen him and General Zorawar Singh, and the same was forwarded to Raja Gulab Singh by Mr. Lushington on January 16, 1842. Later, Basti Ram and 127 of his followers were permitted to leave for Jammu in July, whereas 40 men who were unable to move were left at Almora.

The Chi-Tang fort probably fell on January 2 or 3. The British Agent heard the report of this event from the Tibetan commander of a village of Chipki on January 5, and learnt that the Dogra Army had been dispersed and their leader,

probably Rai Singh, imprisoned. It was strange in fact that the British deputy to the Bashahr frontier informed the "leaders of the Chinese" at this stage that the British Government disapproved of the occupation of the Garo province by the Sikh, i. e., Dogra, armies, "that the Maharaja had ordered Zorawar Singh to withdraw to Ladakh and that J. D. Cunningham had come to see whether the order was obeyed."

After recapturing Taklakot and Chi-Tang and clearing these regions of the Dogras, the Tibetan troops proceeded to Gartok which had previously been the headquarters for all the military posts in that area. Kahlon Sarkhang was stationed there by the Tibetan authorities to supervise troop movements. The three posts of Daba, Tsaparang and Rudok were placed under the command of General Pi-hsi and others. A number of Tibetan columns were sent out to various strategic points to search for and attack the Dogras who had established posts all along the route through which they had advanced. Except for pockets of resistance here and there along the line of the fortified posts, the Dogra invasion of Garo district was at an end. A large Tibetan army had gone into action with orders to seek out all the fugitives and exterminate them. By the end of March, the Tibetans had captured all the forts and military posts and the last of the invaders had been driven out of Tibet. The pickets of Taklakot, Gartok, Rudok, Daba, Tholing and Tsaparang had been reoccupied by the Lhasa troops. The Dogra invasion of Tibet proved futile as regards territorial expansion. Zorawar's endeavours to make Gulab Singh a Central Asian power ended in disaster.

When General Zorawar Singh had received the intelligence of the unexpected arrival of the Tibetan forces on November 6, he had immediately sent for reinforcements. But as the passes and roads had been blocked by snow, messengers could not arrive in time. As late as January 6, 1842, the Sikh troops

were moving towards Garo to give succour to Zorawar Singh, and the people of Spiti had been called upon to furnish their quota of militia to aid Zorawar Singh. Reinforcements had hurriedly been despatched from Jammu and Ladakh. The Ladakh contingent under Pahlwan Singh Kumedan had moved hurriedly towards Garo. But they were at a great distance from the battlefield when they heard of Zorawar's death and the destruction of the Dogras at Toyo. They, therefore, retreated to Leh, and fortified their position there to meet any eventuality arising as a result of the Tibetan mobilisation. The Lhasa armies intended to march on to Ladakh in the coming summer, and the Dogra possessions in Ladakh and Baltistan were gravely exposed to a swarming invasion of Sino-Tibetan troops. But this retaliatory move on their part gave the Dogras, as will be seen in next chapter, a fine opportunity to avenge the defeat at Taklakot and to retrieve their fame as indomitable fighters.

The one great cause of the Dogra defeat was the extreme cold and deep snow. "The Indian soldiers of Zorawar Singh," writes Alexander Cunningham, "fought under very great disadvantages. The battlefield was upwards of 15,000 feet above the sea, and the time was mid-winter, when even the day temperature never rises above the freezing point, and the intense cold of the night can only be borne by people well covered with sheep-skins and surrounded by fires. For several nights the Indian Troops had been exposed to all the bitterness of the climate. Many had lost the use of their fingers and toes, and all were more or less frostbitten. The only fuel procurable was the Tibetan furze, which yields much more smoke than fire; and more reckless soldiers had actually burnt the stocks of their muskets to obtain a little temporary warmth. On the last fatal day not one-half of the men could handle their arms."

The breakdown of Zorawar's commissariat also adversely affected his war potential. The barren and sparsely populated

plains of western Tibet could not keep up the efficiency of even a few thousand Dogra sepoy. When winter blocked all the passes, the invaders found it difficult to procure adequate supplies from the country around or from Ladakh. While facing starvation in the chilly climate of the land of the snows, it was hardly possible to fight against an enemy, particularly with a large army of the local people, which was well-equipped and fully supplied with provisions.

Another cause seems to have been that many of the Baltis and Ladakhis and the local Hunias deserted the Dogras and joined the Tibetans. This must have undermined Zorawar's war strategy at the eleventh hour. The diplomatic treachery can also not be ruled out. The British pressure for the evacuation of the conquered areas and efforts at mediation seem to have put Zorawar Singh off his guard. On the eve of the Tibetan advance on Taklakot, he had actually recalled his advance posts stationed to block all passes and by-passes through which the Tibetan armies could cross down to the Manasarovar lake region. In the absence of advance posts Zorawar Singh received no timely news of the massing of the Tibetan troops on the west of the Mayum pass. When he received the information it was too late. The Tibetans had already occupied Kardung and the area between Zorawar Singh and Colonel Basti Ram and other Dogra officers stationed to the south and west of the Manasarovar lake. The defeat of the Dogras under such circumstances was not something unexpected, though much shocking, as it came about when British diplomats were contemplating Zorawar's withdrawal by the Maharaja of Lahore and the Dogra-British rivalry in the Punjab politics was about to take a serious turn.

VII

The Final Settlement

ELATED AT THE destruction of the Dogra army in the winter snows, the Tibetans began conceiving bold designs of conquests of the Dogra territories. Among the persons imprisoned by the Tibetans was one Gompo, the steward of the powerful Hemis monastery near Leh. Zorawar's death had aroused in him the hope of freeing Ladakh from the Dogra rule. The Tibetans made use of him to foment revolts in Ladakh. He sent a secret message to the people there that "the Wazir (Zorawar Singh) is dead, and the Tibetan army is reported in pursuit. Therefore, upper and lower Ladakh should be made ready for war." He sent another letter to the British asking for aid in establishing an independent Ladakh. The British replied that although they desire peace in the region yet they were unable to do anything since the Sikhs were also their friends.

Not caring for the reply, the Tibetan Kahlons (ministers) and the Gompo had been busy with their plans. As early as the first week of July 1842, it was rumoured that the Chinese would advance on Ladakh, and the British authorities instructed their Agent, J. D. Cunningham, to make the Tibetan authorities understand that the British Government would not tolerate any Chinese encroachment beyond "the western limits of conquests made by the Jammu Rajas in the name of Ranjit Singh in 1836 and 1837." But, in spite of such warnings, there

was a widespread excitement in the Tibetan military concentrations and district headquarters for invasion and occupation of Ladakh.

Zorawar's death had let loose the disgruntled elements in Ladakh who seized the Dogra garrison there and the ex-ruler appealed to the Emperor of China for help. Consequently, the Lhasa authorities resolved to expel the Dogras from Ladakh, and planned to invade it in concert with the rebels. A detachment of 400 men was sent towards Leh but on hearing that small-pox had broken out in the city, the party halted at Nimamut, about eight marches east of that place. Another Tibetan detachment was reported to be marching from Garo to occupy Spiti, the commander of which called upon the people of that district for their submission. During the month of May, the Tibetan authorities speeded up their troop movements for the occupation of Ladakh. In the third week, 800 men arrived at Garo and other troops from Lhasa were also expected to reach that place soon.

The Tibetan preparations for carrying on war with the Dogras were reported on all sides, and in the heat of the moment very confusing accounts got circulated. It was reported that the Ladakhis had captured the fort of Leh, making the chief men prisoners. It was also rumoured that a Sikh army had arrived within a few days' march from that place. After about a week it was rumoured that the Ladakhis had battered down a tower of the fort but had not taken it.

The dense clouds of a decisive war between the Jammu Rajas and the Chinese loomed large on the northern frontier. It was strongly believed that the Chinese advance on Ladakh was bound to be defended by Gulab Singh and in order to prevent any violation of their frontier the British authorities planned to move the Sirmur Battalion to the Bashahr frontier. Reports from Garo and Ladakh revealed that large reinforcements would soon reach Leh from Lhasa, and that the Dogras

in Leh were still holding out against the rebels. The Gompo (Acho Gonbo of Dogra accounts), who used to go to Lhasa as Lop-Chak (ambassador), and was well-acquainted with the people there, had contrived with Pi-hsi, the Tibetan General, to drive out Dogra garrisons from Ladakh and to revive the rule of the Gyalpo there. After sending the message of revolt there, Gompo himself arrived in Ladakh, followed by about 3,000 men under the Lhasa chief, probably in the beginning of April 1842. Gompo collected soldiers from Sham (the lower Ladakh) and took them along with the contingent from Lhasa, reached Leh and entered the Gyalpo's palace during the night and declared Tandoff Namgyal's son, Jigsmat Namgyal, as an independent Gyalpo (Raja) of Ladakh. All the weapons found in the Tang-Mogong and Leh palaces were distributed among the soldiers, and wooden lances were provided to most of them. After these arrangements had been made the rule of Jigsmat Namgyal was formally declared in Ladakh.

Now from all parts of the country, even from Baltistan, matchlock-men arrived and blockaded the two forts in the neighbourhood of Leh in which the Dogra troops had taken shelter. The number of Dogras there, according to A. H. Francke, was about 350 men. The Ladakhi tradition also affirms this number, 50 men under Magna Thanadar in the fort, and 300 men under Kumedan in the Chahon or Chaugan. The number of Ladakhi soldiers who submitted to the new Gyalpo was 2,500, according to the Ladakhi accounts. The detachments of the Tibetans from Chan-Tham had also arrived in Leh to assist the Ladakhis. Their commander was the Tibetan General, Pi-hsi, the "head of the bowmen, who lived in grand style at the Leh palace." The revolt in Ladakh was thus complete in its initial stage.

Revolts are usually contagious in nature; and the Ladakhi revolt was more violent in this trait. It spread to Purig where the situation was not much different from that of Ladakh

because the whole of the frontier region was given a general call for it and was well planned from the beginning. The Kahlon of Malbeh captured all the Dogra soldiers in the Malbeh fort and threw them over the bridge in the Dhaga Nullah. The Raja of Saut also put to the sword all the Dogra soldiers at Pasri-Khar, Chhobar-Khar and outer posts. The same was repeated at Suru-Kartse. The Raja of Pashkum also imprisoned the Dogra garrison there. But he did not join the rebels with full zeal, with the result that the rebel government of Ladakh served him a strict warning. Dras, however, remained peaceful in spite of the best efforts of the rebels.

In Baltistan also rebellion broke out in full force. Raja Ahmad Shah had fallen into the Tibetan hands. He at once joined their cause and sought to destroy the Dogras. He sent messengers to the Balti chiefs and won them over which led to a general revolt. The chiefs of Shigar, Skardu, Rondu, Khapalu and Kurrus threw in their lot with the rebels. They imprisoned Bhagwan Singh Thanadar of Skardu along with his men and sacked the government treasury and the Toshakhana. Haidar Khan occupied Shigar after imprisoning its chief, and as Raja Muhammad Shah of Skardu did not join the rebellion, he was also made prisoner and interned in the Khwardu monastery. Haidar Khan then occupied the Khar-poche (Skardu) fort and proclaimed his rule in Skardu also. Consequently, no vestige of the Dogra rule existed in Baltistan. Thus, almost all the frontier conquests of Zorawar Singh were lost after his death.

Leh, however, was the nerve centre of Zorawar Singh's conquests, where his subordinate officers offered a heroic resistance to the rebels. In spite of being in small numbers amidst a surging ocean of rebels the Dogra garrisons there remained steadfast and undaunted. The eyes of rebels in Baltistan, Purig and Ladakh and the Tibetan contingents were all directed towards Leh where the small Dogra garrison of some

350 men continued to hold out against heavy odds and overwhelming numbers.

This Dogra force was divided into two defensive camps. The one under Magna Thanadar occupied the fort. The remaining force was under Commandant Pehlwan Singh which occupied the Karzu-Bagh. The latter was an unfortified place. When the commandant saw the enemy gathering in large numbers in the Gyalpo's palace, he realised the gravity of the situation. So he moved his camp to a place opposite the fort. But as there was no more accommodation inside the fort, he had to take shelter in the large stables of the Gyalpo of Ladakh, and sought to strengthen the place.

The rebels started harassing them from all sides and with the help of the Lhasa army they surrounded the cantonment, the stables and the fort, and sought to cut off the three places from one another. But the besiegers failed to isolate them. A desultory warfare continued for several days. At last the rebels decided on a night attack so as to destroy the Dogra garrison in the cantonment and the fort.

Luckily for the Dogras, the Ladakhis wasted most of the night in disputation and planning, and carried out their attack only when the dawn was drawing near. The Dogra force offered tough resistance at both the places and the battle continued till the rising of the sun. When it was daylight both Thanadar Magna and Commandant Pehlwan Singh carried on sallies and fell boldly upon the enemy from two directions. In a hand to hand fight a large number of the Ladakhis were killed. At last they lost ground and started running. The Dogras pursued them up to the town and slaughtered several of the fugitives. It is said that in this battle the Ladakhis and Tibetans were killed in thousands and consequently they lost courage. They could not recover their strength for some time and even lifted the siege. Afterwards they could not dare to make another similar effort to surround

the Dogra encampment. The Dogras thus held out at Leh for about six months by which time reinforcements arrived.

Discouraged by these reverses the Ladakhi leaders tried to win over the intervention of the British Government and the King of Lahore. The ministers of the Ladakhi King wrote to the British that they had given the country to the Chinese Emperor—"We had no other remedy. What could we do?", they wrote. In the middle of June a letter was sent to Maharaja Sher Singh of Lahore in the name of the King of Ladakh saying that the Ladakhis had always had relations with China through Lhasa until the Dogras had interfered. Now the Dogras must leave Ladakh as the Tibetans demanded it along with the usual tribute to Lhasa and the acknowledgement of the Chinese supremacy. If Gulab Singh would cooperate, the letter went on, shawl-wool and tea would once again pass through Ladakh and Kashmir to Lahore. But, presumably, cooperation or intervention was not forthcoming.

When disaster befell Zorawar Singh and his army in Tibet, Raja Gulab Singh was at Peshawar as Commander-in-Chief of the Sikh forces sent there to assist the British armies in their Kabul expedition. The news of the Tibetan disaster and Ladakhi revolts came to him as a bolt from the blue. These ill-tidings slowly made their way across the Himalayas by way of Almora to British India and reached Raja Gulab Singh by the end of January. He wrote a letter to the British officers "in which he asks for information as to whether Zorawar Singh is dead or alive," which was forwarded to Almora on January 31. As stated earlier, Colonel Basti Ram had also written a letter from Almora which did not reach Gulab Singh till the middle of February.

On the receipt of Basti Ram's letter on February 15, Gulab Singh was much concerned at the fate of his General. On the one hand, he apprehended that the news, if broken, would probably cause a disturbance among the many friends and

relations of those who had perished. On the other, the disaster might perhaps cause him the loss of all his possessions north of the Himalayas. His thoughts were now "bent towards Kashmir, there to collect a force with which as soon as the season admits, to march on Ladakh." The main aim of Gulab Singh had been to establish a hill sovereignty, but the Tibetan disaster crushed his dearest hopes, and the reverses his army had sustained occupied the whole of his attention, and hence he was anxious to get away from Peshawar and repair to Ladakh against which the Tibetans were advancing.

However, it was not possible for Gulab Singh to proceed immediately to Ladakh or Jammu as the British officers at Peshawar could do nothing without his aid. He, therefore, ascertained the British attitude in the affair and they made it very clear that they "cannot reasonably offer any obstacle to the Rajas (Gulab Singh and Dhian Singh) in the maintenance of their authority at Ladakh, while it desires their cordial co-operation at Peshawar," and they also acknowledged the defence of Ladakh a legitimate measure of the Rajas and wished them every success.

After being sure that the British Government was favourably disposed to his interest in Ladakh, he at once sent for his Commander, Diwan Hari Chand, who was engaged in suppressing rebellion in Hazara on behalf of the Sikh Government, and deputed him to Ladakh. The Diwan reached Jammu by forced marches and met there Raja Dhian Singh who had come from Lahore to equip a fresh force for Ladakh. After much efforts, Dhian Singh raised a powerful army and sent it to Ladakh under Mian Ratanu and Diwan Hari Chand. A force of about 6,000 Dogras left for Kashmir. At Srinagar Wazir Ratanu took over the command. Every day columns of about 500 men were sent to Ladakh for about a fortnight, at the end of which period both the Commanders left for Ladakh.

Before reaching Ladakh they quelled revolts at various places in order to safeguard their communications. At Dras, Diwan Hari Chand received information from Sucheta Thanadar of Kargil that Kargil fort had been invested by the enemy, who had raised two towers in the middle of the mountains in order to block the road from the fort to the river. The Diwan at once sent a strong contingent under Jamadar Ram Singh via Kohi for the relief of Kargil. Wazir Ratanu and the Diwan directed their efforts against the two towers. The Jamadar ascended the hill from the rear and reached a point above the towers where Bahadur Khan Kargilawala was ready to give them battle. Thanadar Sucheta also came out of the fort and surrounded the rebels on the third side. A bloody battle raged for about a quarter of a day before the enemy took to its heels. About 200 of them were killed and a large number of them were washed away by the river through which they had tried to escape.

Next day the Dogra army marched to Chhanajung village where they were surprised by Raja Muhammad Ali Khan Pashkumia. His men suddenly rushed upon the Dogras. The two Dogra platoons sent against them sprang upon them furiously forcing the enemy to run away. The Raja and some 200 of his men surrendered after offering some resistance.

The Dogras then marched to Malbeh and reached the Khalasi bridge on the Indus. The bridge had been pulled down by the enemy and they had gathered on the opposite bank. Another bridge was laid in a day and the Dogra force crossed over to Pashkum. They then advanced in two groups, one under Wazir Ratanu and the other under Diwan Hari Chand, and met at Thasgam, about 3 km from Leh. At the very approach of the Dogra force the Tibetans under Bakshi Chhak Jot lifted the siege of Leh cantonment and withdrew some miles away. Next day the fresh contingent joined the garrison of Pehlwan Singh Kumedan, Tegh Singh Subedar and Bakshi Guranditta at Lubrang, near Leh cantonment.

After a six-day stay there, the Dogra Commander despatched about 1,000 men under Mian Jawahir Singh towards Zanskar, and 500 men under Mian Narainia to Ludrah. The porters and coolies from Kashmir were paid off and sent away. Bakshi Chhak Jot, the leader of the Ladakhi rebels, received the intelligence of the dispersal of the Dogra contingents in various directions. He, therefore, considered it a favourable opportunity to attack the thinned down force of the Dogras in Ladakh. He, deployed about 1,000 men under the command of his brother, Achhan Jot, and Karnasha, brother of Kahlon Ragasha, against the Dogras. They advanced up to a place near Gonpa Chamra. The Dogra commander sent a force against them under the command of Lala Ramji Mal Munshi and Sardul Singh. The Ladakhis were defeated and they took shelter in Gonpa Chamra. At this the main force of the Dogras under Diwan Hari Chand and Wazir Ratanu, set siege of the place and set up a cannon on the top of a neighbouring hill and started shelling the enemy positions. The Tibetan garrison lost heart and sued for peace after four days. Consequently, Bakshi Nihal Singh went inside Gonpa in order to settle term of peace, and led the rebel army out.

They, along with their commander Achhan Jot and Karnasha, were sent to Leh under a strong guard. The Tibetan prisoners rose against their Dogra guards on the way, killed a few of them and tried to escape. But a Dogra contingent from Ladakh arrived in time, caught almost all of them, and sent them under guard of 200 men to Kashmir, and brought them before Gulab Singh who had arrived there from Peshawar.

After withdrawing from Leh and other strongholds, the Tibetans and their Ladakhi accomplices gathered under General Pi-hsi at Drangtse near the western end of the Pangkong lake and there they were joined by a Tibetan

army of 5,000 men under the command of Ragasha and Zarkhang. They dug out trenches and erected a fortified camp there in six days. The Dogra accounts give their number as 6,000 men, led by Bakshi Chhak Jot, Ragasha Kahlon and Raz Chak Garpon, aided by a big cannon which they had wrested from Zorawar Singh.

The Tibetan defence post was set up at Lung-wu, a place between Rudok and the Pangkong lake, on the Tibetan frontier. The camp was located at a strategic, lower part of a narrow valley, and the storming of it would have meant a considerable loss to the Dogras.

The Dogra commander at Leh also made strategic movements to contact the Tibetans in a final decisive battle. He left behind at Leh only 100 men for the defence of that post. Marching the whole of the Dogra army he came close to the Tibetan defences, towards which he had sent his vanguard under Commandant Sardul Singh and Munshi Ramji Mal. The Dogra forces established their first contact with the enemy probably during the last week of July 1842.

On the very arrival of the main Dogra force, the Tibetans decided upon a night attack, and at about mid-night they surrounded the Dogra camp. But the vigilance of the Dogras foiled their attempt and the Tibetans were pushed back. After this abortive attempt, the Tibetans took shelter in the fortified encampment which was strategically located. A desultory battle continued for eight days without any gain to either side. Probably on August 1, the eighth day of confrontation, the Dogras made a desperate charge on the enemy positions at dawn but they could not penetrate the Tibetan fortifications and had to withdraw some six kilometres to a spot on the great lake. In this attempt they had suffered a loss of some 300 men (only 120 according to Meng Pao) and one officer, Commandant Majja Singh.

After a four-day lull in fighting, the Dogra planned to eject

the Tibetans from their trenches by a strategem. They secretly built a large dam lower down the river in order to flood the Tibetan camp, which was situated at a low level in the valley.

In three days, after the erection of the dam, the Tibetan trenches were flooded and had to be deserted. Outside their fortifications the Tibetans were not equal to the well-armed Dogras. As soon as the Tibetans were on the move the Dogra Commanders, Wazir Ratanu and Diwan Hari Chand, led several attacks on the Tibetan formations. "In these battles", reported Mengo Pao, the Chinese Resident at Lhasa, "Jupon Tun-Chei-Ch'a Wang and Chiapon Chi-pu-pa, together with one more Chiapon and two Tingapons, were lost." Most of the Tibetans fled pell-mell and several were made prisoners. The Dogra loss according to Meng Pao, was 230 men and two minor officers killed. As a result of the battle, Meng Pao reported, the Dogras "were prevented from crossing the Tibetan boundary."

It seems that at this stage the Dogra commander combined stratagem with treachery. When the Tibetans were forced to abandon their fortifications as a result of the flood, the Dogra commander sent Qazi Nadir Ali and Wazir Mutsaddi to negotiate a truce. The Tibetans, realising their weak position, readily agreed to the proposal. So the Tibetan men and officers were brought disarmed to the Dogra camp, and were treacherously siezed and made prisoners. This event seems to have been reported by a British intelligence officer in a letter from Leh dated August 10, 1842.

The agent also reported that the Chinese removed the young Raja of Ladakh of Tashigong on the Indus. The later intelligence reports refer to the treacherous seizure by the Dogras of two ranking persons sent by the Tibetans to negotiate with them. Among the officers so seized there was the Tibetan General Ragasha, who made an unsuccessful bid

to escape and got killed in the process. Probably he was murdered to avenge the death of Zorawar Singh.

After the seizure of the Tibetan officers, the Dogra army fell upon the Tibetans and surrounded them on all sides. The beleaguered army surrendered. Their arms were confiscated and they were allowed to escape. The Dogra arms and weapons which had fallen to the enemy in the battle with Zorawar Singh were all recovered. The Tibetan leaders, such as Mor-tan-chin, Achha-gonpa, and Ahmad Shah, Raja of Skardu, became prisoners. After this contest of several days and the ultimate defeat, the Tibetan forces retreated towards Tashigong.

The official documents of the Chinese Resident at Lhasa give the date of this battle as the second day of the eighth month of the Chinese calendar, corresponding to September 6, 1842. But the event might have taken place a few weeks earlier, probably about August 10. A letter from the Court of Lahore to their Agent at Ludhiana, dated August 15, and sent to the British Government on August 31, mentions this battle between the Khalsa (Dogra) and the Lhasa troops in which the latter were defeated, many being killed or taken prisoner, and "all old boudaries of Ladakh...repossessed by the Sikhs."

On hearing of this grim struggle with the Tibetans, Raja Gulab Singh had sent a reinforcement of 4,000 men which stopped on the way on the news of complete victory over the Tibetans. Raja Gulab Singh himself arrived in Leh, in the middle of August, most probably on 12. He at once commenced building a strong fort at Leh in place of the old one.

He also sent Vakils (agents) to the Tibetan leaders to negotiate a treaty of peace and friendship. The representatives sent were Wazir Ratanu, one minor officer and Ah-mich-cho (probably Ahmad-joo), an interpreter. The Dogra Rajas were possibly anticipating the peace talks to take long. Raja

Dhian Singh, therefore, sought the good offices of the British Government. The Governor-General expressed his willingness to offer his good offices in adjusting the differences between the Maharaja of Lahore and the Chinese upon any reasonable terms. A settlement was, however, arrived at without the British mediation.

The treaty of peace and friendship was signed on Asuj 2, 1899 (September 14, 1842), the date given in the Persian copy of the treaty in the *Gulabnama*; whereas, according to the information received by G. R. Clerk, the British Agent, the peace had been made with the Lhasa authorities on September 24. The Lhasa leader, Wazir Zarkhang and others, were released after the exchange of the treaty documents.

The *Gulabnama*, a history of Jammu in Persian, states that the Chinese agreed that "as regards the boundary of the country of Ladakh including its suburbs, fixed of ancient days, we will at all have no objection and nothing to do. We will export shawl-pushm and tea according to the old tradition by way of Ladakh yearly; and if any one of Shri Maharaja Sahib Bahadur's enemies comes to our side in our territories, we will not entertain the word of the said enemies, and will give no shelter in our country to the aforesaid men, and whatever traders will come to our territories shall meet no hinderances. Whatever we agree to in writing on the face of this contract about friendship and unity, fixing of the frontiers of Ladakh territory and the keeping open of the road for the traffic in shawl-pushm and tea, will not in the least be infringed by us."

Thus, the annual trade between Lhasa and Leh was restored, the Dogras taking the place and obligations of the Ladakhi kings. Jigsmat Namgyal was given the jagir of Stog village and was given right to tax only a small number of peasants. Hardly a single one of the old Ladakhi officials remained in office.

The Tibetans mentioned the ancient traditional boundaries of Ladakh and agreed that they will not dispute in future the Dogra possession of Ladakh. They also agreed not to give any shelter or aid to the enemies of Raja Gulab Singh, and that they will carry on the trade in shawl-wool and tea via Leh in accordance with the old custom. The existing situation was recognised by the Sino-Tibetan authorities. On the part of the Tibetans, the Dogras were recognised as the lawful authority in Ladakh. Gulab Singh, and through him, the Lahore Court, gave up all claim to west Tibet. The 'old established frontiers' were re-affirmed and both the contracting parties agreed to respect them. The Ladakhi king was permitted to reside in Ladakh so long as he refrained from intrigues against the Dogra rulers. He was granted permission to send annual gifts (Lob-chak) to the Dalai Lama and his ministers at Lhasa, if he so desired.

The people of Baltistan had also rebelled. Sulaiman Khan, the Raja of Shigar and Muhammad Shah, the ruler of Skardu, were in prison and Kachu Haider Khan was reigning in Shigar and Skardu. The Dogra officers and soldiers deputed in these regions had been besieged in their fortifications and the Dogra rule in Baltistan had come to an end. Gulab Singh, therefore, deputed Wazir Lakhpat Kishtwaria for the suppression of the Balti revolts.

Wazir Lakhpat left Kishtwar for Baltistan at the head of about 3,000 Dogra soldiers. He entered that region through the Chelong-Suru stream. He met resistance all through his advance, but the Wazir pressed on and reached Kargil. Diwan Hari Chand and Wazir Ratanu had already destroyed the rebels there in the battle of Tek-Tek-Mu before leaving for Ladakh. Wazir Lakhpat, therefore, tightened the internal administration, and started preparation for his advance on Baltistan in consultation with Raja Ali Sher Khan of Kartakhsa.

The Wazir crossed the Dras river and came on Shanghu-Shigar, where the Skardu rulers had built a tower and set up a garrison, which offered some resistance, but being outnumbered, all of them were taken prisoners. From thence the Wazir led his army on the upper part of the Dev-sai plain and then went down the Kafchun stream. His movement was so secret and rapid that he took the rebels by surprise.

When Kachu Haider Khan received the intelligence of the arrival of Dogra army in Kaf-chun, he gave up the idea of battle and shut himself up in Khar-poche fort. The Wazir hurried to Skardu and set siege to the fort, which was difficult of approach and hence considered invincible. The Dogras, however, won over the guard at the fort gate, so that when they made an assault in the night, the gates were thrown open and the Dogra soldiers got into the fort and caused much bloodshed. The garrison had been taken by surprise and they ran pell-mell, some of them escaped through land route, whereas others swam across the Indus. A number of them got drowned in the river. In short, the garrison was thoroughly destroyed and the Dogras succeeded in capturing the fort by the morning.

Kachu Haider Khan left the fort by the north gate and ran towards Shigar, and thence left for Yarkand along with his companions. But Raja Daulat Ali Khan got wind of their movements, sent his men after them, who captured them and led them back to Khapalu. Then they were brought before Wazir Lakhpat. The Wazir promptly rewarded the services of Raja Daulat Ali Khan of Khapalu. Then he imprisoned Haider Khan and his 80 companions. After some time Haider Khan was sent to Jammu where he died soon after.

Wazir Lakhpat set fire to Khar-poche fort, the haunt of the rebels, and pulled it down, except a small mosque inside the fort which was left intact. The fort was thus rendered useless. The small cells there were spared in order to serve

as ammunition stores for the Dogra garrison. General Zorawar Singh had already laid the foundation of a new fort during his stay at Skardu on the top of a hill to the right bank of the Sat-par nullah. Wazir Lakhpat now completed its construction, and appointed Bhagwan Singh, who had been released from his Nihali confinement, as the commander of the new fort with a garrison of 300 men.

Muhammad Shah was confirmed as Raja of Skardu, and his powers and prerogatives were left unimpaired. Daulat Ali Khan and Khurram Khan were recognised as Rajas of Khapalu and Kurrus respectively and they were allowed to retain their jagirs as before. Raja Sher Ali Khan had won favour of the Dogras by good services and was, therefore, allowed to keep his jagir of Kar-taksho unhampered. Similarly, Ahmad Khan, Raja of Tolti, was also confirmed as ruler of his principality.

After settling the affairs in Skardu, Wazir Lakhpat left for Shigar. The ruler of that place, named Sulaiman Khan, had died. So he made his son, Iman Quli Khan, the Raja of that place, restored to him all his jagirs, and left some men to guard the place. The Wazir then marched to Rondu for punishing the rebels. The place was carried after a little fight. But in this battle Doghoni-pa Bono, the faithful Wazir of Ahmad Shah and the guide of Wazir Lakhpat got killed.

Astor had also rebelled. The Wazir, therefore, stormed the place. Jabbar Khan, the Raja of the place, submitted and was kept in his office.

Later, the Wazir returned to Skardu, and after settling the law and order problems in these areas left for Jammu via Kashmir, taking along the prisoners of Baltistan. At Purig he caught all the Rajas of the region and others who had taken part in the revolt, including the Rajas of Pashkum, Saut, Takcha, Malbeh and Timbus. He carried them all to Jammu. He also sentenced to death some of the men of

Baltistan and Purig who had taken part in the rebellion. He got their heads hung at thoroughfares as a warning to others. He set up garrisons in the forts of Kargil, Saut, Dras, and Suru for the proper defence of Purig. In short, Wazir Lakhpat's expedition met with a singular success and the administration he set up in Baltistan and Purig became the foundation for future government.

Zanskar had also risen in revolt at the news of Zorawar's death. The rebel chief, Che-moor Gyalpo, had put to death the Dogra Thanadar, Jemadar Deenu, appointed by General Zorawar Singh, and had slaughtered the whole of the garrison, and had thus uprooted the Dogra rule in that area. He had even sent his son to Ladakh to congratulate the chiefs there on their successful revolt. However, at the very arrival of the Wazir there, the people rushed forward to tender their submission which he accepted without reserve. But he captured Gyalpo Che-moor and his family, confiscated his property, and carried them all to Jammu as prisoners. Mehta Basti Ram was then appointed the Thanadar (administrator) of Zanskar. An adequate force was put at his command. A new fort was also built for the shelter of the garrison. In short, he made proper civil and military arrangements in the regions reconquered by him and the last haunt of the rebels was thus demolished and the Dogra supremacy was once again restored over all the territories conquered by General Zorawar Singh between 1834 and 1840.

VIII

Zorawar's Personality

ZORAWAR SINGH SEEMS to have fallen a victim of his own miscalculation and to the British calculated interference in the affair. He miscalculated that the Tibetans would not be able to mobilise against him during the winter because of the blocking of Mayum and other known passes due to snowfall. He, therefore, withdrew most of his forces to his Tirathpuri wintering camp. As the British were jealous of Zorawar Singh's spectacular success in his Tibetan campaigns, it is possible that their machinations brought about his debacle through their agent, J. D. Cunningham, who was in constant contact with Zorawar Singh as well as the Tibetans. Cunningham had advised the General through Colonel Basti Ram that as the winter was fast approaching and the enemy lay in wait he should not advance any further towards Lhasa. The General was also desired to pack up for withdrawal. It is possible that J. D. Cunningham might himself have informed the Tibetans had about the movements of the General. And when the General recalled all his troops guarding the advance posts, passes and routes, Cunningham possibly gave a signal to the Tibetans to overtake him in an unguarded moment. It appears that the British agent was playing a double game.

The invisible cause of defeat, which vanquishes great conquering armies even when these have all the forces of their power intact, cannot be ruled out. Sometimes the physical

make-up of a country and the effects of its extreme climate become a potent factor in the defeat of an army and all provisions made against such eventualities fail to change the course of events. Similar factors seem to have been at work in Zorawar Singh's case. In Tibet, he had to fight two enemies, the second being the elements of nature—altitude, climate and terrain. In a way, Zorawar Singh lost the battle not so much to the Tibetans as to the rigours of the Tibetan winter. "It was a great mistake," says A. H. Francke, "on the part of Zorawar to start on this new expedition at the approach of winter." In this case, it was miscalculation to lead an Indian army in winter in a battlefield which was situated at an altitude of 4,570 metres and he committed the same blunder by invading Tibet in winter which was previously made by Mirza Haider, and therefore met with a similar, rather worse, disaster.

Nevertheless, his exploits brought honour not only to him personally, but to the entire military system of India. The usual belief that the Indian armies remained confined to their own soil and never won laurels in foreign countries, have been belied by the Dogras more than once, and it shows that Indian forces in the past also could conquer foreign lands if they so chose. The Indian soldiers of Nurpur-Pathankot Raj extended Mughal conquests beyond the Hindu Kush as has been narrated earlier. The Dogra force under Zorawar extended the Indian frontier beyond the highest northern mountains. These are no mean achievements of the martial spirit of India which is usually wedded to the ideal of peaceful coexistence with its neighbours from times immemorial, although her neighbours have frequently violated her borders and desecrated her soil by unnecessary bloodshed.

Zorawar was "the greatest general the Dogras have ever had." A. H. Francke says, "We cannot help admiring a greatness in this man by which he by far surpassed the surroundings.

He was extremely cautious in his movements, so essentially necessary considering the naturally protected position of western Tibet and his entire want of the knowledge of the geographical conditions of this country. But, as he had a keen eye for the defects of his enemy, and was a great strategist, all these difficulties were overcome." He proved himself a true soldier in the endurance of extraordinary hardships. He was a great military leader, an undaunted soldier and a master strategist. He had carried his Tibetan campaigns to a point where the frontiers of Nepal and Kumaon met the eastern-most fringe of his conquests. He carried the boundaries of the Jammu Raj to the heart of Tibet, to verge on the western part of Nepal whose ruler sent his representatives to welcome the Dogra conqueror at Tirathpuri.

Lt. General Govardhan Singh Jamwal has given a fine analytical assessment of Zorawar's war strategy in glowing words. Taking the accepted yardstick of principles of war, we find Zorawar adhering to the main principle of war scrupulously. His crossing of the Zaskar range in the middle of the winter in 1835 to surprise the Ladakhis and his spirited offensive orders and the coining of a slogan at the spur of the moment in the battle of Manasarovar turned the defeat into victory. The mere fact that a person born and brought up in the warm climate dared to conquer Ladakh, Baltistan and Tibet proves his great martial spirit.

Mobility was another principle which he adhered to against heavy odds. His infantry moved light yet self-contained. He used local ponies which were more mobile in that terrain. He extracted mobility out of his infantry by making them march over long and difficult terrain and often in unexpected direction which gave him the element of surprise. During his march in the middle of winter from Kishtwar to Leh to crush the insurrection led by the Gyalpo, his force covered a distance of 480 km. in ten days over snow-covered

passes. In his battle against the Skardu forces, he crossed the river at night and attacked the enemy entrenched on a hill-top from the rear.

“Besides being an intrepid commander,” opines K. M. Panikkar in *The Founding of the Kashmir State*, “he was also gifted with considerable political ability. His settlement of the newly-conquered provinces bears witness to this. To have marched an army not once or twice, but six times over the snow-clad ranges of Ladakh and Baltistan, 4,570 metres above sea level, where the air is so rarified that the people from the plains can hardly live with comfort, is no mean achievement. To have conquered that country after successive campaigns and reduced it to a peaceful province is an exploit for which there is no parallel in Indian history. His greatness will shine through the pages of Indian history as that of a great and noble warrior of whose achievements India could be justly proud.” “He was an unassuming and simple man but a strict disciplinarian,” writes Lt. Col. (now Lt. Gen.) Govardhan Singh Jamwal in the U. S. I. Journal. “He was uneducated but intelligent and kind yet firm.”

He led a very simple life, and as has been pointed out by K. M. Panikkar, he lived on his meagre pay and never made money from his campaigns or accepted any bribe or presents. He deposited each and every pie obtained during his campaigns in the State treasury. He never sent any despatches or information about his conquests except the revenue and tributes, and Gulab Singh had to discover from others what new country his General had conquered. He was so honest that once when Gulab Singh asked him to demand something for himself he demanded only two things : food to eat and the clothes used by Gulab Singh himself to wear and nothing else. He never accepted gifts nor allowed his soldiers to accept them. Looting and pillaging were unknown to his soldiers, for his punishments were exemplary. His soldiers loved him

for he would go into the minutest details of their welfare. Although his name is still associated with terror in the areas he conquered and is often used by mothers to quieten their babies, yet it is a fact that he never harassed the public, neither converted them nor destroyed their religious places and institutions. After a battle was over, he was considerate towards his opponents, and he administered conquered areas through local rulers. His use of local resources in men and horses shows his administrative ability of a high order.

However, Zorawar Singh's victories had produced an awful impression on the Tibetan people. They took him to be a superman. It is said that when he died his blood and flesh were distributed by the Tibetans among themselves to be kept as sacred souvenirs. His head was severed and taken to Lhasa for enshrining in a Chorten. It is said that the Buddhists of Tibet still pay their respects to these sacred relics in the belief that it would avert the wrath of the spirit of the Dogra General and prevent it from entering the body of another man to wreak vengeance on the Tibetans. The Tibetans are said to have built a large Chorten in the battlefield of Toyo where Zorawar was killed in order to forestall the possibility of his reincarnation into another human form for the destruction of Lhasa. Zorawar's is the unique instance of a military commander who was so honoured by the very people whom he wanted to subjugate. In a sense, Zorawar was victorious in his defeat also. For, his heroic fight against tremendous odds won him the admiration and esteem of his opponents to this extent that they kept pieces of his flesh in their homes under the impression that possession of the flesh of such a gallant soldier would confer a bold heart on them. They also raised a big Chorten over his bones—an honour they reserved for their high priests only. Pieces of his mortal remains were placed in certain monasteries also.

His capture of the famous 'Mantalai' (i.e. Manasarovar)

flag, which is now the proud possession of 4th Battalion of the JAK Rifles, which then formed part of Zorawar Singh's force, reveals the quality of leadership and resourcefulness he possessed. The flag was captured during an action fought on August 7, 1841 at Dogpacha, near Missar, a place about one day's march from Tirathpuri in the district of the famous Manasarovar and Rakastal lakes.

Here the Dogra army had reached a region where the caravan road crossed over three nullahs flowing down the 6,692 metre high Mount Kailas into the Sutlej. Zorawar Singh established at this place a camp for the night and issued instructions for the next days' march to the sacred lake and the Kailas Parvat which would be an occasion of great sanctity and pilgrimage. The Tibetan commander of Gartok had already withdrawn to that place and entrenched there to give battle to Zorawar Singh with the aid of some 1,200 locals and 250 Jukpas tribesmen, as narrated earlier. In the middle of the night, the Tibetan forces surprised the Dogras with an attack. The Dogras were caught unawares and it seemed impossible to resist effectively the well-planned and coordinated night attack by the Tibetans in the darkness in almost zero visibility. As happens on such occasions, a great confusion prevailed and the Dogras, Baltis and Ladakhis commenced fighting each other. Zorawar handled the situation promptly and tactfully. He at once issued brief but succinct orders in a loud voice that a man belonging to his force should shout "Jammu Raj ki Jai," to be answered by "Sitla Mata ki Jai". Anybody who failed to utter the required slogan was to be slain unhesitatingly. The device worked miracles. It not only overcame the crisis and enabled the Dogra men to single out their enemies, but also charged them with zeal and confidence which stood them in good stead in the hand-to-hand fight in the darkness. A fierce battle continued till daybreak when the Tibetans took to flight. The Dogras, however, captured their flag bearing the strange

device of a dragon, called by the Dogras 'Mantalai Flag'.

Zorawar stands out as a leader of men, particularly under trying and difficult conditions which distinguish him as a military general from most of the others. He always believed in personal example and was often found amongst the leading troops in the battle. In fact, he was always present wherever his personal presence was required. He would have defeated the Tibetan troops and occupied Lhasa before the winter. However, it was not to be. After having been deflected from his main aim by a strange hand of destiny cast through the British diplomacy, Zorawar was content with his achievements and went for a pilgrimage to various religious monasteries, the sacred Manasarovar lake and Mount Kailas. He decided to withdraw to Leh after stationing garrisons at important places and forts. But his death on December 12, 1841 upset the apple cart of his Tibetan campaigns turning the Tibetan expedition into a complete disaster.

The human machinery with whose medium Zorawar got such great victories, was organised on such sound lines which gave it a unity and strength and developed its confidence, optimism and high morale. Good administration seems to be Zorawar's strongest point. He knew that high altitude warfare in cold regions required acclimatisation, hard training and proper administration. The first he achieved in Kishtwar where his troops got training for many years at a height of more than 1,830 metres before they entered a career of conquests in Ladakh and Baltistan. When his soldiers became used to geographical conditions in Ladakh and Baltistan he moved them over the high and cold Tibetan plateau some 4,570 metres above the sea, with astonishing success. He gave his infantry hard training to improve its power of endurance, so that once in the month of January he marched his army from Jammu to Leh by a direct route in ten days over some 4,260 metres to 5,180 metres high passes and surprised the rebellious Gyalpo of Ladakh. As Napoleon used to say about the

ex-treme mobility of his armies, so in the case of Zorawar, it was the legwork which achieved his victories. Resourcefulness is one of the great qualities of a successful military commander. Zorawar had a lavish gift of this. He made full use of the local resources in men and ponies, fodder as well as cooperation of the local population and chiefs, thereby economising his own resources and manpower. He strengthened his hold on conquered territories by winning local chiefs, and by treating the population kindly after they had submitted. He strengthened the lines of communications and ensured their security by leaving small garrisons along the route of his advance. He even succeeded in making the conquered people his partners in further conquests. He used Ladakhis in extending his conquest to Baltistan, and both the Ladakhis and Baltis in conducting his campaigns in Tibet.

It is noteworthy that Zorawar's military campaigns were characterised by utmost caution, adequate pre-planning and preparation. A dexterous politician and an astute general, he anticipated situations and made suitable provisions for them before he embarked on a campaign. He took a full stock of the strength, fighting ability and disposition of the enemy. In order to be able to do so he gathered full information on the nature of the country and the character of the chief and his army he was about to attack. For this purpose he adopted several methods. He used to meet people who were conversant with that country, talk to them and collected from them all relevant information which could help him make a true assessment of its military power, the characteristics of the people as well as the land. He would contact traders, travellers and disaffected people, and ascertain the location of forts, garrisons, nature of routes and the state of provisions and resources. This he did for several years before launching his armies into Ladakh. Similarly, his Tibetan campaign was preceded by an exhaustive inquiry about the topography, history and military organisation of that country.

For securing intelligence he won over the local people by promises of rewards which he always fulfilled. He richly rewarded local guides who showed the way to his forces through unknown routes and who gave him useful information about enemy positions. He made a good use of disaffected elements in Ladakh and Baltistan. He sided with the Kahlon of Timbus against the Gyalpo of Ladakh, and similarly gave shelter to the son of the Raja of Skardu in order to plan the conquest of these regions. He thus successfully used to his advantage the disgruntled elements in the countries he conquered to alienate the supporters of his enemies by promising them due consideration, and he always honoured such promises.

In short, Zorawar always tried to weaken and demoralise the enemy before making an attack, and by further alienating his people and friends created possibilities of defeating him in detail. After defeating them he befriended them and used them to further his interests.

But the success of all these diplomatic moves of the General depended on the efficient internal administration of his camp and efficient prosecution of campaigns. He made adequate provisions for meeting the needs of his soldiers according to the climate and surroundings. They were supplied with adequate clothing in winter in the form of leather trousers and jackets made of sheepskins. To provide shelter, tentage was carried and temporary hutments were raised wherever possible. Small forts were constructed at convenient distances to secure successive bases to fall back upon in the event of reverses and to station garrisons to strengthen the means of communications. He seldom destroyed shelters and houses and even repaired buildings and monasteries in western Tibet where he also built the strong fort of Chi-Tang. Tents made of yakhair were provided in Ladakh, Baltistan and Tibet.

The soldiers were equipped with country-made matchlocks or percussion-cap type guns, gunpowder and grape-shot. Probably the 'Par-mar' brand of rifles, devised by Gulab Singh himself with a longer range, were used by the Dogra infantry. In addition, every soldier carried a sword, a dagger, a lance and a shield. Locally cast mountain guns weighing about 150 to 190 kg, which could be dismantled into smaller parts, were carried either by men or on beasts. If men had to carry the guns, some 12 to 15 were required for each gun. However, four or five animals could carry a stripped gun to the usual heights scaled by Zorawar's army. Field and garrison guns were manufactured at Jammu and Kishtwar. The artillery units were fully equipped with bags of powder, iron and stone balls and grape-shot in required quantity. Each soldier was provided with some $4\frac{1}{2}$ kg. of grape-shot. Percussion-caps were issued in the quantity of 50 per weapon. Almost all the ammunition was manufactured locally at Jammu and Kishtwar. Gunpowder was even made in Ladakh and Tibetan territories by the experts who accompanied the General. This explosive material was used for the usual purposes of tunneling, mining and clearing roads.

Rations were carried by men on their backs. The normal ration consisted of parched barley flour (*Sattu*) and parched gram and gur. Any locally available grain was ground into flour as for example *grim* in Ladakh. Such grain was ground in the hand-mills which each unit carried.

For the carriage of bulk rations and heavier material proper provision was made. Soldiers were trained to carry about 37 kg of load on their backs, usually in skins. Local labour and ponies were used for carrying bulks, tentage and stores. Zorawar usually paid wages to the labour and pony-men for carrying load. Beasts of burden were required in large numbers. His artillery alone required ponies and yaks to the number of at least a thousand, for carrying guns and ammunition. An equally large number of labourers was also required for other

jobs. His Commissariat Department was responsible for arranging labour and ponies. Provision was made for medical aid in each unit to which a few vaidis, hakims and barbers were attached.

As Gulab Singh had been a military officer and jagirdar of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, so his army had been organised on the lines of the Sikh army. Gulab Singh even induced some of the European officers of Ranjit's army like Gardner and Honigberger, to join his military system. Zorawar continued almost the same organisation of the army with necessary local modifications. Incidentally, it was based upon the European principles as had been introduced in Ranjit's army by Generals Ventura, Avitabile, Allard and others. In Zorawar's system, infantry was the main arm, as cavalry was impossible of use in the mountains. Of course, in lower hills cavalry was also used.

A company consisted of 100 men and was commanded by a subedar. It was subdivided into 2 platoons of 50 men each, commanded by jemadars. A platoon had five sections of 10 men each commanded by a havildar. Eight companies formed an infantry battalion, which was commanded by a kumedan or commandant, assisted by an assistant kumedan. A Bakshi performed the duties of an adjutant. An infantry battalion had the following establishment : A pandit, hakim or vaid, a surgeon, munshis or clerks, a musaddi or accountant, artisans like blacksmiths, cobblers, carpenters. masalachis and water-carriers, dak orderlie, mates and coolies, and transport personnel.

Cavalry was also organised on the pattern of infantry. Each horseman provided his own beast and carried a sword, a shield, a lance and a match lock. Zorawar used hill ponies, which were habituated to ascent and descent, the mountain climate and local conditions.

Artillery regiments were similarly organised. Each regiment had ten pieces of guns. Each gun was under a jemadar and had a crew of eight. Each gun could be broken into four pieces and were usually carried by ponies. The average range of these guns was between 700 and 11,00 metres. There were at least three types of guns with varying size and capacity—garrison, field and swivel mortars.

Zorawar's army was composed on secular principles. His commanders, officers and men included both Hindus and Muslims. He recruited from all the martial classes of Jammu, Kangra, Chamba, Kishtwar, Riasi which formed the core of his army—the Dogra, who were selected for their endurance, that is, who could climb a steep hill carrying a 37 kg of load and could handle his weapons effectively at the end of the climb. To this he added recruits from Kashmir and Ladakh also. In a list of 106 prisoners of his army repatriated from Tibet in 1857, some 30 were Muslim soldiers out of which 11 were from Kashmir. Among the repatriated prisoners was one Ram Dayal, the family Purohit of Zorawar Singh, who had accompanied the latter on his trans-Himalayan campaigns. On his return to Jammu Pandit Ram Dayal related many stories about the General's achievements which became widely current in Jammu territories.

General Zorawar Singh was the right hand man of Gulab Singh. He was one of his most honest and loyal servants. For the sake of his master's exaltation he endured all types of privations and hazards, and inspired by the zeal for loyalty he overran and conquered Suru, Purig, Zanskar, Ladakh and Baltistan, scaled the highest passes which a plains man ever waded through in strange lands. With the same spirit he swept over the world's loftiest plateau of Tibet, and finally laid down his life at the altar of love and loyalty to his motherland. In invading the territory of Tibet his intention was to get back for his country the sacred lake Manasarovar, Mount Kailas,

the abode of God Shiva, and Gurla Mandhata, which once formed part of the Bharatvarsha of the old and are lauded in the epics and the Puranas as the sacred places of pilgrimage. Had he lived longer he would have been of immense value to Gulab Singh in creating and stabilising a large empire extending far into the Central Asia. From Ladakh, Baltistan and Tibet the Dogra conqueror used to send trophies of war and tributes, which he collected, to Jammu treasury. By his dash and martial prowess he spread his own fame and that of his master in India, Tibet, China and several Central and West Asian countries.

Although some British writers sought to belittle his achievements by painting him as a tyrant and heartless invader who oppressed the conquered peoples, yet the Buddhists of Ladakh and Mussalmans of Baltistan held him in high esteem and reverence for his magnanimity and dispensation of even handed justice to them. To rebels and traitors, however, he gave exemplary punishments, particularly to those who had treacherously butchered the Dogra garrisons. Devoted to his own religion, he honoured other religions and their sacred places. During his campaigns in Ladakh and Baltistan there was not a single instance of destruction or desecration of a mosque or a monastery. He ensured that his troops did no damage to the standing crops, nor indulge in loot and pillage. Nor was there any molestation of women. He was thus a humane conqueror in whom a soldiers' warlike nature had been tamed down by a regard for the life and property of others.

General Zorawar Singh will ever be remembered for his unique achievement of conquering for India the highest lands in the world with the help of men from the plains not usually accustomed to the extremely cold climate and impassable terrain. "During the long history of India," observes K. M. Panikkar "no army from Hindustan had attacked Tibet. No

Indian ruler had thought of conquering it and no Indian general accustomed to the heat of plains had ever dared face the vigour of the Tibetan climate. Zorawar conceived the idea of conquering the central Tibetan province for his master and prepared an expedition for that purpose." He led his conquering army deep into the Tibetan territory for over 640 km and made a mark in the history of warfare. By conquering and annexing Ladakh and Baltistan, he added to India permanently a large slice of territory which no other emperor or general of India could do for over 2,150 years after Chandragupta Maurya.

General Zorawar Singh had no son to perpetuate his line. He had three wives. The first one was from the Langeh Rajput house of Ambgarohta village in Jammu, who died at an early age. The second and third wives were real sisters belonging to a Rajput family of Gai village near Pauni-Pahrakh. Their names were Asha Devi and Lajwanti, the latter being the elder of the two. Asha Devi accompanied the General on his Tibetan expedition and had performed pilgrimage to the Kailas and the Manasarovar lake in the company of her husband. When the General decided to give battle to the Tibetans, he sent Asha Devi back to Leh under military escort, from where she returned to Riasi under the protection of the Dogra officers.

As the mountain passes were blocked by snow, the news of the death of Zorawar Singh reached Riasi a month and a half later. On the receipt of this sad news the two wives of the General prepared for the *Sati* rite. Gulab Singh sent his eldest son, Udham Singh to prevail on them to refrain from this act. The elder, Lajwanti, thus changed her mind, but the younger, Asha Devi, unable to withstand the pangs of separation, could not refrain from the act. Holding in her lap the turban of her husband she immolated herself on the banks of the Chenab which flows under Bijaipur, the residence of General Zorawar Singh. The funeral pyre was lit by Thakur Dharam Singh, lifelong faithful companion of the General, whom she blessed

with a boon. A *Samadhi* was built at the spot where she performed *Sati*, but the same has now been washed away by high floods in the river.

General Zorawar Singh had built his residence at Bijaipur, a village situated about 3 km west of Riasi on a high plateau lying between a dry nala and the river Chenab. This castle-like residence stands at the western edge of the plateau overlooking the river which suddenly emerges here from a gorge behind the high rocky ridge, which is the end of a spur from the Trikuta range. The highly romantic site and the tasteful mural decorations inside the palace show that the General, though cast in rough and rugged physical frame destined for a hard military career was nevertheless blessed with an eye for the fine arts. This residence and the lands attached to it were inherited by his elder brother, Sardar Singh, whose descendants at present own it.

The character of Asha Devi has also been bestowed with a certain romance in the legends which gathered round the General and his favourite wife. The Ladakhis sing a song about her, in which she is made to lament after the tragedy at Toyo in which the General was killed after sending her away to his distant castle.

Asha Devi says :

“I do not wish to eat bread received from the sinful
northerners.

I do not wish to drink water received from the sinful
northerners.

Amidst the inhabitants of this land I have no friends
and relations.

In the northern plains I have no brothers and friends.

In the place of friends and relations I had only
Zorawar.

In the place of brothers and friends I had only
Zorawar.

And it was only Zorawar who made me a despised
widow.

And it was only Zorawar who made his queen a despised
widow.

When arriving at the Zoji pass, my fatherland can be
seen.

When arriving at the Zoji pass, Lahore and Panjab can
be seen.

Although I can see my fatherland, I shall not arrive
there.

Although I can see my fatherland, a Zorawar's queen
will not arrive there."

Appendix

Translation of a Treaty of Peace and Amity concluded between the Chinese and the Sikhs, subsequently to the death of Wuzer Zorawar Singh, signed by Kaloon Zorkund on the part of the former, and Rutnoo Wuzer and Dewan Hurry Chand on the part of the latter.

The following chiefs herein assembled in the city of Leh on the 28th of Assuge, 1890 Sambut, corresponding with 17th October, 1842, viz. Kaloon Zorkund and Dewar Jeesy on the part of the Chinese, and Shah Gholam on the part of the ruler of Lahore, and Rutnoo Wuzer and Hurry Chand on the part of Raja Goolab Singh besides others of inferior note belonging to both parties. It was mutually agreed that a treaty of amity and peace should be concluded between the Chinese and the Sikhs, the conditions of which as undermentioned were recorded in writing in the presence of the chiefs aforesaid, and likewise Sib Chu Tukpan Peesy, and Laumbe Wuzer both confidential advisers of the Viceroy of Lhasa.

Art. I That the boundaries of Ludak and Lhasa shall be constituted as formerly, the contracting parties engaging to confine themselves within their respective boundaries, the one to refrain from any act of aggression on the other.

Art. II That in conformity with ancient usage, tea and Pusham shawl-wool shall be transmitted by the Ludak road.

Art. III Such persons as may in future proceed from China to Ludak or from Ludak to China, not to be obstructed on the road.

Art. IV That no renewal of the war between the chiefs of the Raja Goolab Singh and those of the Viceroy of Lhasa shall take place.

Art. V That the above mentioned conditions shall remain in force without interruption, and whatever customs formerly existed, shall not be removed and continue to prevail.

Art. VI It is understood that in signing the above treaty, the contracting parties are bound to a true and faithful observance of all the provisions thereof, by the solemn obligations attached to the holy place called "Geugri to the Lake of Shanta Lari and to the Temple of Kojoon Cha in China."

True Translation

Signed : J. C. Erskine
Political Agent
Subathu

*(Secret Consultations of the Foreign Department, May 24, 1843,
No. 62, National Archives of India, New Delhi)*



PUBLICATIONS DIVISION
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